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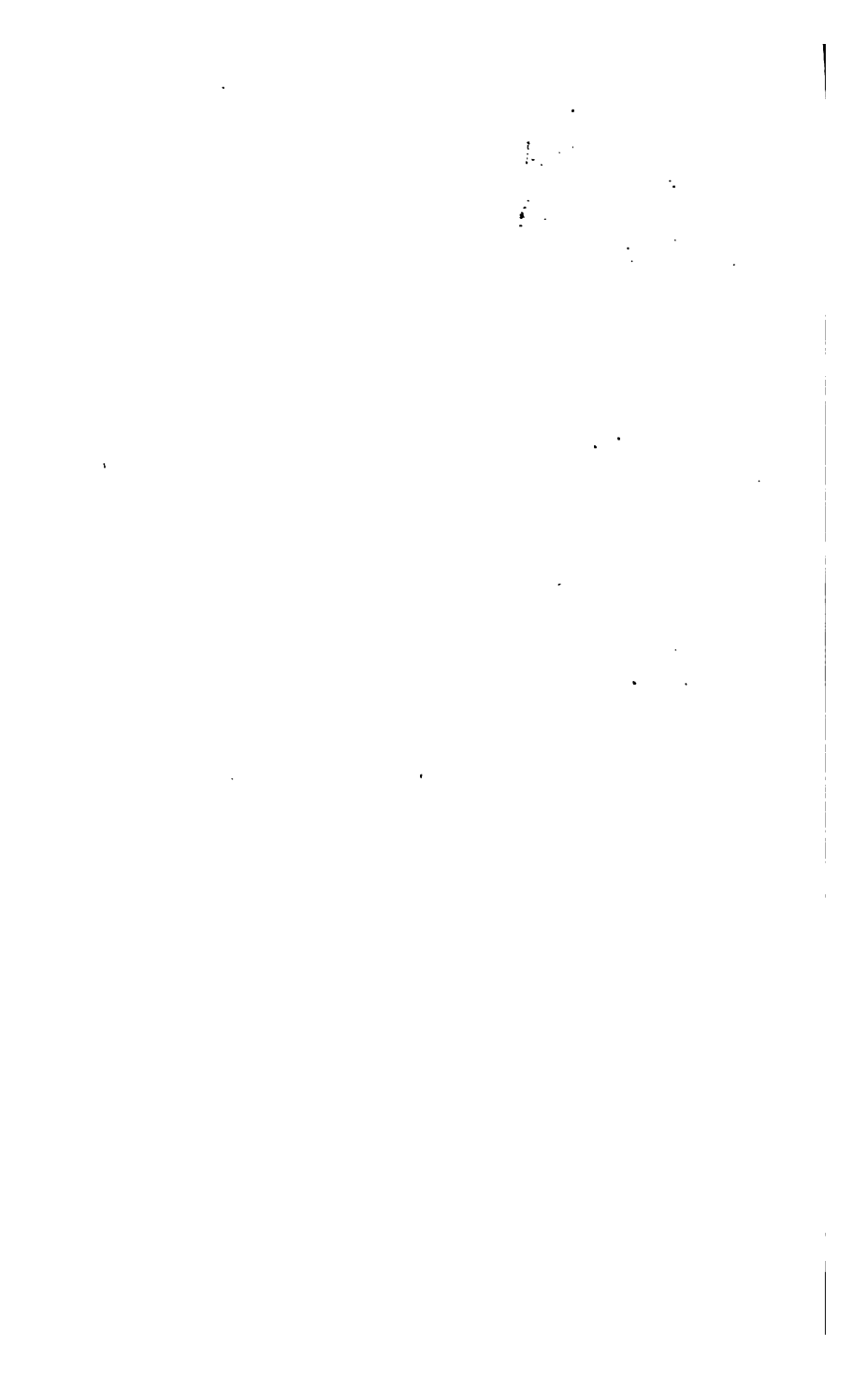












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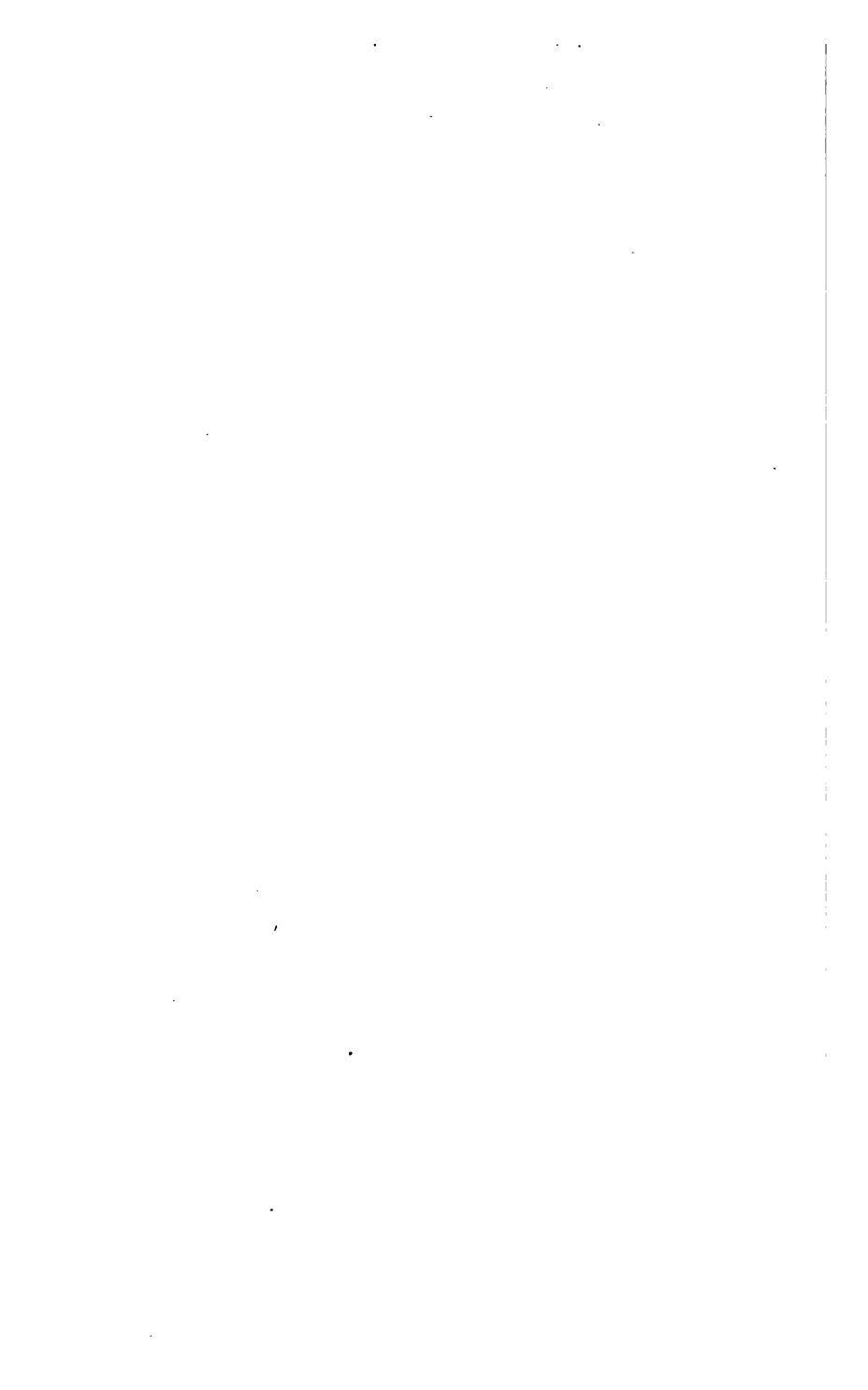
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POETS AND POETRY

OF

GERMANY.



# POETS AND POETRY

OF

## GERMANY.

BIOGRAPHICAL AND CRITICAL NOTICES.

BY

MADAME L. DAVÉSIÉS DE PONTÈS,

Translator of "Egmont," "The Niebelungen Treasure,"  
"Körner's Life and Works."

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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## CHAPTER I.

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### ERRATA.

#### Vol. II.

Page	46	line	12	for is. read are.
"	69	"	26	" for. read to.
"	84	"	29	" that. see. read see. that.
"	188	"	8	" for. read with
"	241	"	1	" the country. read the woods of the <del>same</del> <del>same</del>
"	414	"	31	" this. read the.
"	544	"	27	" destroyed. read destroyed.

splendour with which it was invested by his country and country, will ever stand high in the annals of literary fame.

Frederick Gottlieb Klopstock was born the 24<sup>th</sup> July 1724 at Quedlinburg, in Prussia. His father was a farmer in good circumstances, and generally respected for his generous nature and stainless integrity. Both

parents were sincerely religious; but the religion of the father was tinged with a certain gloom, while that of the mother was calm, hopeful and serene. Under their joint influence, the boy imbibed those sentiments of pure and fervent piety which formed the ground-work of his character. In his thirteenth year he was sent to the Gymnasium in his native town, and thence to the University at Schulpforte, in Prussia, where he devoted himself with energy and success to the study of the classics. Fond of athletic sports, particularly of skating, in which he excelled, he was a general favourite, and the head and front of every boyish enterprise.

Klopstock's love of poetry displayed itself even in his school-days, and he composed both Latin and German verses with elegance and facility. The plan of that work which was to occupy so large a portion of his life seems to have been formed at a very early age. According to some of his biographers, it was the result of a dream; according to others, it owes its origin to the perusal of Milton's "Paradise Lost" in Bodmar's version. If the latter statement be correct, this translation, ill as its common-place prose renders the sublime original, may claim the honour of having performed two important services in the cause of German literature. It had, as we have seen, <sup>(1)</sup> destroyed the authority of Gotsched, it now inspired the genius of a Klopstock. Bodmar relates that one evening after conversing for some time on the beauties of "Paradise Lost", the youth exclaimed: "How is it possible

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(1) Vol. 1st Part 2d. p. 488.



that a mere human being should be able to describe this circumstantially, and enter, not only into the feelings of the spirits of Hell, but even comprehend those of angels, nay more of the Almighty himself! Surely Milton must be regarded by men as a prophet, and his name stand among them in the same honour as an Ezekiel or an Isaiah! I too sometimes in sleepless nights have ventured to form the resolution of penetrating into the mysteries of the spirit-world; but I did not yield to the temptation. I repressed it as a vain and audacious presumption." At this time, he was but fifteen.<sup>(1)</sup>

If discouraged by the difficulties of the attempt, Klopstock had indeed really abandoned his long-cherished idea, it was only for an instant. Thoughtful and reflective beyond his years, he already perceived and lamented the inferiority of his country's literature to that of England or France, and burned with the desire to redeem the honour of the German Muse. He remained long undecided as to the subject of the poem. His desire to select a sacred theme was combated by the fear lest he should be unworthy or incompetent to treat it fitly, and at one time he had decided on selecting a hero among those of his native land. But he could discover none whom he deemed worthy of the honour. He was not destined however to produce the poem of which while yet a boy he drew the sketch, in the first fire of youth and ardour. Years were to elapse ere he found leisure and opportunity to carry out his design.

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(1) *Leben von Klopstock*, von Döring. Vol. 1st.

In 1745 Klopstock quitted Schulpforte. In his farewell address, recalled years after, when his name had become the pride of his country, he expressed the hope that Germany would ere long rise in the rank of nations both in a political and literary point of view; that it would produce men of genius worthy to rank with those of every other land and, above all, an epic poem which might stand side by side with those of ancient Greece or modern England. Perhaps in his inmost heart he cherished the proud though unacknowledged hope that he himself might be the regenerator of his country's literature. In 1746 he proceeded to the university of Jena. Here he prepared the three first cantos of the "Messiah" in prose; for he was yet undecided as to the choice of his metre. The hexameter was his favourite; but despite his predilection, he seems to have reasonably doubted whether the German language was sufficiently harmonious to admit of its adoption.

In 1716 he removed to Leipzig where he resided with the nephew of his mother, Professor Schmit, a man of considerable attainments, who introduced him to Gellert, Rabener, Cramer and other individuals of note. For awhile he kept his work a secret from all, save his companion; but having at length determined on selecting the hexameter, he suffered the three first cantos to appear in a paper entitled "Bremen contributions". They were received with a burst of enthusiasm. The grand scale of the design, the ancient measure, the depth and elevation of thought, the pure and holy spirit which breathed in every line, attracted the sympathies both of the poetical and re-

ligious world, and though it was not suffered to pass without criticism, in the "Messiah" all eyes beheld the dawn of a brighter day. And yet it may be doubted whether in introducing the hexameter, Klopstock rendered the poetry of his native land so great a service as he believed. We are aware that this opinion will be deemed heretical, more especially by the Germans themselves, who, generally speaking, indulge in the firm conviction that they have caught the very harmony of the Homeric verse. We believe however that a cursory examination of the "Messiah", or even of the more perfect specimens of Voss or Goethe, will suffice to prove that the rules of German quantities are very different from those of Greek or Latin; for it will be difficult to recognise brief syllables in those composed of one vowel followed by two, three, or four consonants, as for instance:

"Dröhend erschöll der g<sup>e</sup>ff<sup>u</sup>g<sup>e</sup>lt<sup>e</sup> D<sup>o</sup>nn<sup>e</sup>rg<sup>e</sup>s<sup>a</sup>ng In der Heer-  
schar etc.

Even on its first appearance, amid the rapturous acclamations with which the work was hailed, the new measure, as Klopstock calls it <sup>(1)</sup>, met with some animadversion. Kleist amid his enthusiastic praises declares that it is even more extraordinary than that of his own "Spring"; nor was his the only voice raised against it.

Klopstock was now fairly embarked on the tide of poetry, and it became henceforth his sole vocation. In the intervals of more serious labours, he composed many odes and love-poems full of a chastened tenderness which proved that his religious

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(1) „Ueber den Hexameter“. *Messiah*. Vol. 2d etc. Halle. 1756.

fervour had not weakened his earthly affections. The object of his lays was no ideal being, though the charms and virtues with which he invested her, were drawn in a great degree from his own fervent imagination. He had to encounter the opposition of the maiden's parents who would not hear of their daughter's union with a young man destitute both of rank and fortune. His rising fame was of little value in their eyes. They knew that the profession of a poet was by no means a lucrative one, at least in Germany.

Probably, however, this would not have seriously impeded the success of his suit; for the young lady had a tolerably firm will of her own, had not his timidity prevented his exhibiting himself to advantage in her eyes. His love was that of a young and timid heart which trembles to avow its passion, and the maiden often accused him of coldness, when he was only overpowered by excess of affection. "Every evening", he says in a letter to Bodmar, "I presented myself before her abode, only too happy if she deigned to give me a sign from the casement. Once I ventured to pay her a visit by day, and offer her a bouquet which I implored her to place in her bosom; but she gaily refused. I felt annoyed. Evening came, and I was resolved not to pass under her windows, and thus to return her haughtiness with contempt. But when the usual hour arrived, I found my chamber too narrow to contain me. At least I said I can go to the corner and survey her dwelling. I went. At the corner I fancied I saw something move at the windows. Against my will my feet went on, and I stood beneath the casement without knowing

how I came there. I drew off my hat, the lattice opened, and the bouquet fell into it. I bore it home in triumph as the conqueror bore his laurel-crown to the altar of Jupiter. "I know not", he says in a subsequent letter, what will be the result of my love. I have not seen her since I sent her my odes and, except a slight blush, she has given me no token of the impression they have made. If I knew not how tender are her feelings — but I will break off. I will speak no more of my love, since I can speak of it only at an Iliad length."

Fanny was in no hurry to decide her lover's fate. His homage flattered her self-love, without making any deep impression on her heart, although there were moments when touched by a tenderness so constant, so devoted, she gave him hopes of a final triumph. "I now think I am loved", he writes in May 1749. "You may imagine how happy I should be, could I say it with certainty, how proud to win her!" Thus he continued to fluctuate between hope and fear for more than two years. At times, ashamed of his infatuation, he would tear himself from her and seek in absence a cure for his fatal love; but he soon found the remedy worse than the disease, and implored permission to solace himself by at least writing to his cruel mistress.

"I passed near you this morning", he wrote on one occasion, "I again beheld the heaven that surrounds you. How gladly would I have hastened to you; but Schulze who is now master of my actions would only grant me two hours leave of absence, and that would have been just time enough to bid you fare-

well. How many good-morrows did I send you! Did they not reach you? or were they all borne to other worlds? A secret murmur must have announced my vicinity".

From this letter and several others it would seem that Klopstock had at length some hopes of winning the hand of the fair tyrant. If so, he was destined to be cruelly disappointed. Fanny soon relapsed into her former coldness, and Klopstock resolved to subdue a passion which he began to feel utterly hopeless. He therefore accepted his friend Professor Bodmar's invitation to spend some time with him at Zurich, where the latter had fixed his residence. In May 1750 he left that spot where so many youthful hopes had been formed and blighted.

On his way he visited Halberstadt to make the personal acquaintance of the excellent Gleim, and arrived at Zurich the 23<sup>rd</sup> of July 1750. He was received with the most affectionate cordiality. Great was the astonishment of those who knew him only as the author of the "Messiah" and had pictured to themselves a pale, grave, silent personage with solemn air and gait, to behold a young man whose manners, though tinged at moments with a shade of melancholy, the result of that unrequited passion which still gnawed at his secret heart, were generally cheerful and sometimes gay, who shared in the simple amusements of the good Zurichers, bandied innocent jests with maid and matron, and seemed in all things like one of themselves.

While lingering beside the lake of Zurich and striving by assiduous study and occasional poetical compositions to beguile his thoughts, Klopstock received a

letter from the King of Denmark, a warm admirer of his genius, inviting him to his court, with the promise that at the earliest opportunity he should be promoted to a post worthy of his acceptance. This assurance was accompanied by another which in our eyes would not have much enhanced its value viz; that one hundred and fifty thalers, or about twenty-four pounds, per annum, should be settled on him so soon as he set foot on Danish soil. But twenty-four pounds in Denmark in the eighteenth century, was equal to five times that sum in England in our own day. Besides the prospect for the future was too bright to be rejected; so in 1751 the young poet bade adieu to his generous friend and set off for Copenhagen. That neither time nor absence had succeeded in completely effacing the recollection of his early love, is evident from the following letter to her brother: "How much better had it been, had I never loved your sister. I do not know the grounds of her cruelty, but I am inclined to mourn rather than complain. I often dream of her, and weep during and after the dream. But what tears! No remains of hope — Fanny quite lost to me! I often wish I had never seen her, never heard of her. Then I might love another — now — that is impossible!"

Happily Klopstock was mistaken. On his way to his new home he stopped awhile at Hamburg. His heart was yet bleeding from the disdain of her he had so long and vainly loved, when he first heard the name of that fair gentle being, destined at no very distant period to console him for all his sufferings. One day, in conversation with his friend Gies-

secker, the latter drew forth a letter containing criticisms on the "Messiah", which he read aloud to the author. Struck with the depth of thought, the keenness of observation and, above all, the true poetical feeling they presented, Klopstock eagerly inquired the name of the writer. "It is a maiden", replied Giessecker laughing, "and if you like, I will procure you the pleasure of her acquaintance". Klopstock gladly accepted the offer, and a day or two afterwards, furnished with a letter of introduction, he called on the fair critic.

Margaretha Moller was one of the most enthusiastic of Klopstock's admirers. Ardent and imaginative, endowed with talents of no common order, with a heart as warm as her intellect was cultivated, the author of the "Messiah" was in her eyes the ideal of all that was great and good in human nature. To see him, to know him, seemed to her a privilege, which would gratify her utmost wishes, but which she could scarcely ever hope to enjoy. Her delight and astonishment may be conceived when she actually heard his name announced. Meta was at that moment engaged in some domestic occupation, no other we believe than that of sorting out the household linen, and the room was consequently in no little disorder. Her sister proposed declining the visit for that morning; but the fair enthusiast would not hear of such a suggestion. The linen was quickly concealed and Klopstock introduced. The interview was long, and both parties were equally pleased with each other. But we will let Klopstock describe his impressions in his own words.



"Perhaps" he writes to Gleim (1<sup>st</sup> May 1751) <sup>(1)</sup> from Copenhagen whither he proceeded after lingering three happy days at Hamburg, "you may have heard Giessecker speak of Meta Moller. I spent the greater part of the time I was at Hamburg with her. This maiden is at once so gifted, so amiable, and so charming, that sometimes I can hardly avoid giving her the name that is dearest to me in the world. I told her my sad story. If you had seen how she listened, how sometimes she interrupted me, how she wept, and how completely I have gained her friendship! The maiden grieved to hear what I had suffered. Yet it was not for her sake that I had mourned. She is indeed a sweet creature. We have agreed upon a correspondence, and she writes as naturally as she speaks. Besides French she is well acquainted with English, Italian, Latin, and perhaps Greek for aught I know".

From this letter it is clear that Meta had already made no ordinary impression on the heart of the young poet. Ere long indeed, the image of Fanny, which had evidently already receded into the background, altogether disappeared. His correspondence with Meta became more constant, more animated, and rapidly assumed a character of warmth and tenderness verging upon love.

On his arrival at Copenhagen Klopstock was welcomed with the utmost kindness and courtesy by his royal patron. He received an honorable appointment with no inconsiderable emoluments, and was admitted to the intimacy both of the king and the royal fa-

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(1) Klopstock's Briefwechsel mit seinen Freunden.

mily. But Meta was not forgotten. In the summer of 1752 he obtained leave of absence and hastened to Hamburg, to renew his acquaintance with her whom he now felt was essential to his happiness. Meta, as we can see from her letters to our own celebrated novelist Richardson (<sup>1</sup>), had long secretly responded to Klopstock's affection. With her native frankness she at once confessed her love. The opposition of her mother, who despite her esteem and admiration for the poet, disliked the idea of giving her child to one almost a stranger, delayed the marriage for nearly two years, the greater part of which Klopstock spent at Copenhagen. Confident in the truth and affection of his betrothed, cheered by her constant correspondence and by the tokens of esteem and regard he received from all around, he sedulously devoted himself to the completion of that great work, the success of which was to ensure at once his happiness and his fame. His correspondence with Meta during this period evinces the utmost attachment, blended with that true piety which amid the joys of earth never forgets the Giver, and refers all events to a higher power. Meta's letters are replete with a tenderness almost childlike in its naïve simplicity, yet full of all woman's passionate devotion. The following extracts can scarcely fail to possess some interest for the reader.

#### KLOPSTOCK TO META.

"You know how my life hangs on yours! take care of yourself, for my sake. I was last evening with

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(<sup>1</sup>) Life and letters of Richardson ed. by Ms. Barbauld.

Gärtner: I hardly missed you, so much did I think and speak of you. If you are only well! could you but know how I rose at day-break, how I prayed and wept for you! The inexpressible love of that sleepless night I will relate when we meet. And the thought of eternity! that boundless thought, so nameless and so vast! Even when I am beside thee, and say so much and am so well understood!"

## META TO KLOPSTOCK.

Oct. 1752.

"I should not have thought that parting would be so bitter. What is life without thee! now every thing reminds me of the hours that are departed, when I had my best beloved beside me. I kiss thee for all thou hast written of Fanny. Oh! Klopstock, I must not think of that time; my eyes fill with tears at the bare recollection of all you must have suffered. Could I but make you amends for all! I cannot yet; but when I am your wife I can and will."

"Come, Klopstock", she says in another letter, "that I may embrace thee, and never again let thee escape from my arms. What long and weary days have I known. Not that any one has offended or annoyed me; oh no! but they did nothing to please me; they did not speak of thee. I was in one of the loveliest spots in the world; but what availed it: I was not with thee. I was in what is called good society: but all that is nothing without thee! For thou art my all; amid a thousand changes the day seems endless, and alone with thee in one chamber without the slightest amusement, without any thing but each other,

it would pass like an hour! Oh Klopstock! how happy shall we be, if we can spend whole years together and not find one day too long! if contented with each other we need no change! Yet what is the highest earthly bliss to that we may hope for in a future state!" "Through thee I shall trust to become better and better. What a difference between the present moment and six months ago! Before thou lovedst me I dreaded happiness. I feared lest it should divert my heart from God. How was I mistaken! sorrows, indeed, lead to God, that is true; but happiness like mine surely cannot estrange from him. It rather brings me nearer to him. Gratitude, joy, every feeling of bliss, renders my devotion more fervent, more sincere."

"I have often said that I should like to know the feelings of any one on the announcement of some joyful event. Now I do know them: for even in the first moments of rapture he cannot feel more than I do at the thought that thou lovest me". "Do not fancy", she writes, 16<sup>th</sup> August 1752, "that I reproach you because you have remained a few days with your father and your friends? I thought, 'tis true, that you would have returned to me to-morrow or the day after. I cherished this hope in all its strength; but I am not angry: it is your friends, your parents, who keep you with them; it is my friends, my parents, who resign me for your sake. I have just been alone in the garden; not indeed really alone, for I had company with me, but without mingling with them! Oh! it was such a beautiful starry heaven — thou knowest not what an impression that makes upon my soul!"

"Since Klopstock and I have met", writes Meta to her correspondent Gleim", I firmly believe that all those who are formed for each other are sure to meet sooner or later. How could I ever dream, when I knew Klopstock only by his "Messiah" and his odes, and so fondly wished for a heart like his, that very heart would one day be mine? "I am inexpressibly indebted to you", she adds on a subsequent occasion, "for sending me Klopstock's portrait. What joy have you given me! It hangs so that I can see it everywhere in my room. True it is not quite that countenance with which Klopstock looks on me, but on the whole I am well pleased with it."

"Even in my thirteenth year I thought seriously how I should arrange my life, whether I married or remained single. In the first case, I settled how I should manage my household, educate my children, and, above all, conduct myself towards my husband. I formed the *beau-ideal* of the consort I should desire, and Providence has given me precisely him whom I had pictured to myself as the type, the model of human perfection".<sup>(1)</sup>

At length, in the spring of 1754, Klopstock obtained the consent of the mother of his beloved to their immediate union. By the completion and publication of the second volume of the "Messiah" he had increased, in no common degree, the fame he had already attained; and many were the maidens, both in his native and adopted land, who would have been proud and happy to become his bride. Klopstock had likewise consoled himself for his separation by composing, in the in-

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(1) Klopstock's Leben von Döring.

tervals of his more serious occupations, some of those odes which were so much admired by his contemporaries; among others, "The two Muses", (translated by Mad. de Staël in her "Allemagne") and "Her Slumber". In the version we present we have ventured occasionally to deviate from the exact metre of the original, substituting blank verse for the hexameter, but always preserving both the thoughts and expressions with as much fidelity as possible.

### THE TWO MUSES.

I see, oh! is't the present I behold,  
Or does the future meet my eye? I see  
Germania's Muse step boldly in the lists,  
And challenge Albion to the glorious course.

Two vast and lofty pillars mark the goal  
Beyond where eye can reach: ancestral oaks  
O'er-shade the one; and o'er the other, waves  
A lofty palm-tree in the evening breeze.

Inured to combat proudly Albion's Muse  
Within the arena steps, as once she spurn'd  
The burning sand, victorious in the course  
With Maia's son, and Rome's triumphant Muse.

Trembling meanwhile, her youthful rival stands,  
With ardour trembling, not with fear; her breast  
Is arm'd with dauntless courage. Crimson glow  
Her cheeks and loosely flows her golden hair.

Scarcely her panting bosom can retain  
Her eager respiration. Towards the goal  
She bends impatient. As the herald lifts  
His trumpet; fire flashes from her eyes.

Proud of her rival, of herself more proud,  
The haughty Briton measures with a glance  
The younger Muse. "I know thee now", she cries,  
Together 'neath the forest oaks we grew,

Beside the ancient Bards. But I had heard  
Nipp'd in the bud, thy brief career was o'er.  
If thou'rt indeed immortal, gentle Muse  
Forgive that till this hour I learnt it not.

Dim in the distance canst thou mark the goal:  
There is the crown, the prize of victory!  
This haughty silence, this suppressed fire  
That downcast burning glance I know them well.

Reflect e'er yet the final trumpet sound.  
Was it not I who boldly kept the lists  
Against the Muse of proud Thermopylæ,  
Against the mighty of the Ægean hills?

She speaks; the awful moment is at hand;  
Daughter of Albion! Teutonia cries,  
With glance of fire, I love thee from my soul!  
But with a love more ardent, more intense

My bosom pants for immortality  
And yonder glorious palms. Thine be the prize,  
If that indeed thy genius can command:  
But let me strive at least to share the crown.

My heart beats high. O ye immortal powers!  
Perhaps I first may reach yon glorious goal,  
And in my headlong course may feel thy breath,  
O Muse of Albion! on my flowing locks.

The trumpets sound: with eagle-speed they fly,  
Vast clouds of dust ascend; they near the oak,  
Deeper and denser still becomes the cloud,  
I gazed in vain, for both were lost to view.

Thus concludes the ode, and there is both tact and modesty in leaving the victory undecided. Certainly at that period, at least, the most enthusiastic German could scarcely have ventured to give it in favour of the Teutonic muse.

#### HER SLUMBER.

She sleeps! O slumber, from thy dewy wings  
 Distil thy sweetest balm on that pure heart,  
 And let her draw from Eden's silvery springs,  
 Those crystal drops that bid all pain depart.  
 Where the red rose that virgin cheek has fled  
 There gently print thy fragrant touch; and thou  
 Peace, holy peace which love and virtue shed,  
 Inmate of heaven, but rarely found below,  
 With thy soft wings, my best-loved Cidly shade.  
 How calm her rest! Then let thy harp-strings sleep.  
 Thy budding laurel-wreath will surely fade  
 If with thy song thou breaks't that slumber deep.

These poems excited the warmest admiration, which even now has not declined. "In these odes", observes Hildebrand<sup>(1)</sup>, "Klopstock has not only seized the purest tone of lyric grace, but avoided the monotony which characterizes most of his other compositions; here every lay breathes a peculiar perfume and is coloured with its own peculiar hues".

A vainer and more ambitious woman than Mad<sup>me</sup> Moller might have been contented to have accepted Klopstock for a son-in-law, when she saw him arrive in the suite of his royal patron, the King of

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(1) Hildebrand's *Deutsche Literatur von Lessing bis auf die Gegenwart*.



Denmark, not as a dependent, but as an honoured friend, and heard his praise both as a poet and a man, from every lip. The marriage was celebrated June the 10<sup>th</sup> 1754, and Klopstock hastened to present his bride to his father and mother at Quedlinburg, where she received the most affectionate welcome. "My life till now" he writes, "was but a dream; *now* only that Meta is mine, do I fully understand its value, and thank that God who gave me the power to adore Him. The glory of earthly existence has fallen to my share, the palm of victory is in my hand. I sing the hymn of peace and joy to Jehovah."

It was at this period that the following portrait of Klopstock was drawn by his friend Sturte. "Klopstock is the life of every circle. He is overflowing with wit and merriment, and adorns the most trivial subjects with the wealth of his poetical genius; he is never bitter nor violent in his discussions; but is modest, and willingly endures contradiction; yet he is no courtier." "He demands inward worth, instead of allowing outward wealth and splendour to dazzle him, and shrinks from the cold and condescending patronage of the great. The higher the rank of the individual, the more earnest must be his advances if he desires Klopstock's friendship. His chief delight consists in accompanying his friends on country excursions and mingling in the amusements of the young. Indeed he is continually surrounded by young people, and this alone proves his love for pure and undefiled nature. Pictures, unless they possess life or animation, deep meaning and expression, attract his attention but little. It is the same with music: it thrills his soul only

when it breathes forth the accents of suffering love; when, like hope, it rejoices or exults in the pride of freedom and victory."

The happiest season in the year for Klopstock was when the wintry breeze sweeps over the ice-bound stream. Skating was his passion and many an ode proves the delight this exercise afforded him. Scarcely had the ice lightly covered rill and lake, when he commenced his favourite diversion. Every piece of water in the neighbourhood was familiar to him, and he counted the moments till all were sufficiently frozen to allow of his skimming over their surface. He looked down with mingled pity and contempt on those who disdained this noble sport, and defended both its antiquity and its merits with an enthusiasm at once ardent and amusing. Next to his own countrymen, he esteemed the Dutch, because they had nobly broken the yoke of tyranny and were first-rate skaters!

After spending some time at Hamburg, Klopstock and his wife set out for Copenhagen. Though happier than she had ever pictured in her fondest dreams, still it was not without a pang that Meta tore herself from the tranquil home of her childhood, from the friends of her youth, from the tender mother and the fond sisters, by whom she was so justly beloved and whom till then she had never quitted.

"Ye maidens", she writes to some of her young companions, in a strain at once tender and sportive, "who fancy it is so easy to exchange the country of which you well know the worth, and where all your friends and relatives reside, for a land where you

have none nor ever can have such as you have left behind you, do not go unless you have a Klopstock. But this single possession atones, I need not say for the loss of all the rest!" "I must tell you a new happiness," she writes again, "which increases the number of my calm enjoyments. Klopstock who had hitherto written out his compositions himself begins to dictate them to me! This is indeed a delight! Klopstock's first manuscript is always written by my hand, and thus I am the first to read his beautiful verses! Rejoice in the advent of the second volume of the "Messiah". Abbadona appears more frequently in the ninth song. Do I love Klopstock particularly as the author of the "Messiah"? Ah! for how many causes do I particularly love him! But on this account more than any other. And what a love is this! How pure, how tender, how full of veneration! I am most anxious he should finish the "Messiah", not so much on account of the honour which will redound to him in consequence, as of the benefit it will confer on mankind. He never works at it without my praying that God may bless his labours. My Klopstock always writes with tears in his eyes!"

In 1756 Klopstock determined on paying a visit to his wife's relations at Hamburg, and Meta hailed this period with a delight, natural to her warm and affectionate heart. "I cannot neglect sending a few more lines," she writes to her mother, "though I shall so soon be in your maternal arms, and imploring your blessing with a daughter's most ardent love. To-morrow we set off; all our preparations are made, and I am ready for the journey." On the 10<sup>th</sup>

of May accordingly they embarked on board a yacht which the king had placed at their disposal, and commenced their voyage. "We have fine summer-weather" writes Klopstock, "thirteen ships sailed before us, two of which are close to the horizon. My Meta is well, but will not promise to remain such a heroine if the wind rises. Thanks to God who has hitherto granted us a favourable voyage. The weather has been so calm and lovely that I have been on deck since early this morning." They continued to enjoy the same good fortune during the whole of the voyage, rather a tedious one in those days, and arrived in safety at their destination. Klopstock had proposed visiting his parents at Quedlinburg; but a variety of circumstances prevented his executing his project. Equally affectionate in his filial as in his other domestic relations, the separation from his aged father and mother, the former of whom had become extremely ailing, caused him the deepest concern. "All my happiness," he writes from Hamburg, "is darkened by the regret that I cannot see you whom I so much love." "May God preserve you", he adds somewhat later; "my soul sinks within me, when I remember that I may never again behold you. I will tear myself from the thought of the danger which threatens you. I will endeavour to leave all to God. Oh! what would this life be, if that trust were wanting! He will do according to his wisdom and mercy!"

Klopstock's resignation was ere long to be put to the test. Shortly after his return to Copenhagen, whither his duties recalled him, he received intelligence of the death of his aged father. His grief

was deep and sincere, and he mourned more particularly for his mother's sake, left with narrow means and several children still in the years of childhood. "Klopstock", says Meta, "grieves as a man and a christian. Silent tears, eyes raised to heaven, hands clasped, these are his outward marks of sorrow. His first words after a long silence were, "I have thee still, and he clasped me fervently to his bosom." "My soul is sad within me", he writes to his mother, December 1756, "yet may His name be blest who granted my dear father so calm and peaceful an end. He is now far happier than we are. Doubtless he thought of his absent children who so fondly loved, who still so fondly love him. In what words, in what manner! I trust to God we may so live that the blessing of his prayers may rest upon us! My grief is calm through the grace of God; but it will not soon subside; I am still oppressed with sorrow at the death of my beloved father." He adds in a subsequent letter: "Your detailed account of his end deeply moved me. I do not know if I could have borne to witness it; had I been able, I should have learnt a most valuable lesson. How much I wish I could do something to aid in the education of my brothers and sisters! But I am myself in narrow circumstances."

But a far heavier blow awaited the affectionate and sorrowing son. The death of his venerable father had been the only interruption to four year's domestic happiness, and Meta had but one wish ungratified, that of a child, to inherit the virtues and genius of the husband she so proudly loved. This

wish seemed at length about to be gratified. "I am," she says in a letter to Richardson from Hamburg, where she was then staying 1758, and written only three months before her death, "thanks to God in the full hope of becoming a mother in November. The little duties and arrangements for the child, and how dear are they to my heart! have occupied so much time that I have not been able either to answer your letter or to send you the promised scenes from the "Messiah". This is the reason we are now at Hamburg, as we usually reside at Copenhagen. We came here only on a visit to my family, but as my husband was obliged to return for a while to Copenhagen and I cannot travel, I am forced to remain here without him. We write to each other by every post; but what are letters in comparison to the presence of the beloved. Yet I cannot tell you how happy I am. A son of Klopstock! When shall I have him. I have often remarked that great geniuses seldom have children, or if they have, if sons, they are worthless, though charming, or else they have only daughters, like you and Milton. Son or daughter however if only the heart be good, I shall love it dearly!"

But Providence in its inscrutable wisdom had destined that all these bright hopes should be blighted. Little did Meta imagine, as she indulged in fond anticipations of long and happy years with her husband and her child, that the very blessing so earnestly implored was to doom her to a premature grave. If, as from some of her letters it would appear, a dark foreboding did at times flit across her mind, it was quickly dismissed as absurd and groundless. She died in childbed

amid pangs which she endured with heroic fortitude. She was interred at Ottensee, near Altona, her infant in her arms. A weeping willow bends its verdant branches lovingly over the tomb, where so much tenderness, love and virtue lie buried. On the stone is the following inscription: "Seeds sown by God to ripen for the harvest."

Klopstock's grief was intense, but silent. His sorrow was too sacred for utterance; it lay deep within the recesses of his own heart. "I have", he says in the introduction to her literary remains, "I have lost her who made me as happy by her love, as she was rendered by mine. How much do I lose in her, in every respect! How perfect was her taste! how pure, how vivid her sensations! She remarked every thing, even the slightest turn of thought. When I read her my verses, I needed only to examine her countenance to perceive whether they pleased or displeased her. We understood each other, when we had but begun to explain ourselves."—It was not till the following year that he ventured to visit her grave, for the first time since he had stood by her open coffin. He then added the following lines to the inscription on her tomb: "I am come, my friend, my wife, my beloved one — I whom thou fondly lovedst, and by whom thou wert so tenderly beloved. But from this grave we shall rise together, thou my Meta, and our son." The following little odes have much simple pathos, and are evidently the natural effusions of deep regret and passionate remembrance.

## A SUMMER'S NIGHT.

When the moon sheds her radiance soft and bright  
Upon the deep and shadowy woods below,  
The dewy leaves perfume the breeze of night  
That waves them to and fro.

Thoughts of the loved one, cold within the tomb,  
Distract my soul — methinks that form I see —  
Her grave alone seems rising, mid the gloom  
The breeze of eve has no perfume for me.

In happier days, beloved, oh how oft!  
At thy dear side I breathed the fragrant air.  
To me, then lighted by the moonbeams soft,  
Nature indeed was fair!

## THE MOON.

Welcome, o silvery moon,  
Companion of the night so still and lone.  
Thou fliest. Oh fly not yet, return full soon.  
Thou lingerest! the cloud that hid thy face is gone.

The blush of early May  
Alone is lovelier than a summer's night.  
When pearly dew begems her locks with light,  
And from the hills she comes, while flowers bestrew her way.

The moss bedecks your graves.  
Ye whom I loved in boyhood's golden morn,  
How blest when at your side I hailed the dawn,  
Or watched the sun descend behind the silvery waves.

- After Meta's death, Klopstock lingered at Hamburg and Quedlinburg, till the beginning of the following summer; he then returned to Denmark where he continued till the year 1762, devoting the greater



part of his time to the completion of the "Messiah", of which two volumes had already appeared. His work, hitherto the delight of his existence, was now the consolation of his lonely widowhood.

During these years one circumstance only seems to have broken the sad, but peaceful, monotony of Klopstock's existence. In the winter of 1761, as he was diverting himself with his favorite amusement of skating, the ice broke, and he sank almost to his chin in the water. A young friend, at his side, succeeded with the aid of the bystanders in saving him, though not without considerable difficulty. Klopstock, notwithstanding the danger of his position, did not for an instant lose his presence of mind. He gave his deliverers minute directions how to aid him, and frequently loosened his hold of his friend's hand, though at the imminent risk of again sinking, when he thought his grasp might possibly drag him down with him.

During the intervals of composition he devoted himself with great diligence to the serious study of the means by which the German language and literature could be raised to a higher standard. He burnt with the desire of recalling the public attention to the national poetry, the beauties of which he so fully appreciated as to be indignant with all who despised them. In his poems, however, he continually introduced the Scandinavian Mythology, imagining it to be Teutonic; for it was not till a later period that it was discovered that they were not precisely similar.

Years passed on, and Klopstock who during this period had lived in almost complete seclusion, began,

as time softened his anguish, to become doubly sensible of the utter loneliness of his position. Widowed, and childless, while still in the bloom of manhood, scarcely thirty-eight years of age, can we wonder if the image of that domestic happiness, for which he was so peculiarly fitted, should at times have presented itself to his mind? Certain it is that about this period he formed an attachment to a maiden in whom he fancied he beheld a resemblance to his departed wife, and in whose affection he trusted to find consolation for his loss. Dona, thus Klopstock calls her, seems not to have been disinclined to listen to his suit; but she was of noble blood, and the pride of ancestry was too strong in her father's heart, to yield even to the charm of the poet's fame or the prospect of his daughter's happiness. This incident has given rise to the observation that Klopstock's sensibilities were neither very warm, nor very lasting, and that the resignation he evinced under his domestic affliction was less the result of religious submission than of coldness of temperament. But a careful consideration of his conduct and character will prove the injustice of such a charge. More than four years had elapsed since the death of Meta, and even grief itself, however deep, passionate and sincere, must either yield before the wonder-working hand of time, or break the heart that cherishes it. The observation of a great poet, "that the heart may break, yet brokenly live on" is true to a certain degree. The bright delusions of life may be for ever dispelled, its hopes blighted, its glorious dreams of joy rudely swept away, a cloud may have settled on the whole aspect of

creation which no after-happiness can entirely remove. But Providence in its infinite mercy, has provided in the mysterious influence of time alone, a comforter of whose power we can form no conception until we have ourselves experienced it. We do not forget the dead, we do not cease to love and hallow their remembrance; but gradually, though slowly, they recede into the back-ground of our thoughts, and become invested with the pale and shadowy hues of the past. Were it not for this process so silent, so imperceptible, that it often evades the keenest analysis, life would be utterly unendurable. To this natural source of consolation, which all more or less experience, must be added in Klopstock's case another, still more certain. Klopstock was in the truest sense of the word a believer. The Book of Life was not only the source of his poetic inspirations, it was the continual companion of his thoughts; and from its sacred pages he could not fail to draw support and consolation in the hour of affliction, and the prospect of an eternal union with the beloved and lost. Thus supported he could never be utterly overwhelmed by any blow, however heavy. He knew the hand from whence it came, and blessed it while it chastened. Sorrow only softened and subdued his character, and shed a milder hue over his naturally joyous nature. But it neither dried up his sympathies, nor destroyed his energies; it neither plunged him into hopeless apathy, nor stung him to despair. His religion was not that which darkens the atmosphere of life, but that pure and healthful piety

which sheds the light of its own calm and grateful spirit on all around.

Occasional journeys varied the quiet tenor of his existence. In 1771, he spent some days at Frankfort, where he visited the mother of Goethe. Madame Goethe awaited this interview with the utmost impatience. She had formed her idea of the personal appearance of the poet from his works, of which she was an enthusiastic admirer: and expected to see a man, in her own words, with a halo round his head. She was not a little disappointed therefore at the entrance of a small unpretending figure that looked very much like an ordinary mortal. When Klopstock, instead of opening a discourse on poetry or literature, began enquiring, with every appearance of interest, what sort of government Frankfort enjoyed, her disappointment was complete.<sup>(1)</sup>

It was about the same period, or somewhat earlier, that he became acquainted with Angelica Kaufmann, who sent him a picture, the subject of which was taken from his "Messiah", and subsequently, at his request, her own portrait as the Muse of Germany.

In 1761, died the poet's great friend and patron Frederick the Fifth of Denmark. Klopstock mourned his loss with affectionate sincerity. The Danish Government seemed somewhat inclined to withdraw his pension: but the idea was soon abandoned, as no less unjust towards the poet who enjoyed, than disrespectful to the memory of the monarch who had conferred it.

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(1) See Madame Goethe's letters. — Klopstock's life by Döring, etc.

At length, in 1773, Klopstock completed that work to which he had devoted twenty-seven years of his existence. He was at this time residing at Hamburg with Frau von Winden, niece to his departed wife, who devoted herself to the care of his declining years with all a daughter's tenderness. It was on the 10<sup>th</sup> of September that he completed that poem which, whatever its defects, must be ever regarded as forming an era in German literature. "That morning", says Frau von Winden, "he stood for some time, his hands crossed behind his back, with an expression of unusual solemnity in his countenance. He scarcely breathed. I anxiously enquired if any thing was the matter; he made no reply: tears rushed from his eyes; he advanced towards the writing table, and in a few minutes had poured forth his fervent gratitude in the ode commencing

I hoped in thee alone, and I have sung  
The song of the new bond. Divine Redeemer,  
The long and fearful way my foot has trod, &c. &c.

The third portion of the "Messiah" did not however create so great a sensation as the two previous volumes. The subject, which from its lofty and religious tone had inspired such unusual enthusiasm, began now to weary public attention, and, in addition, the latter cantos are decidedly inferior in poetic merit to the preceding. Indeed despite all its manifold beauties, it has become a proverb that few living men have read the "Messiah" from beginning to end; a fact easily explained, not only by its inordinate length and over-minuteness of detail, but by a certain monotony — a want of ani-

mation which increases as the work proceeds and sadly mars its interest.

The difficulties which beset sacred poetry are always great; the theme indeed is the loftiest, the most sublime that can be sung by mortal lips; but its very elevation renders its range extremely limited; for it is necessarily confined to prayer, praise, and thanksgiving, to expressions of resignation under trials inflicted and gratitude for blessings received. This embarrassment is enhanced when the poem is of considerable length and, above all, when the Deity is introduced *in propria personâ*; when the author ventures to present Him whom Moses beheld only through a veil, in human semblance, to place mortal words on the lips of the Eternal. There is continual danger of overstepping the bounds prescribed by that reverential awe with which frail mortals must ever regard the Creator of Heaven and Earth — of intrenching upon that Holy of Holies where human foot dares not tread — of presuming to lift with sacrilegious hand the veil which shrouds the face of the Deity. How indeed can mortal paint or conceive the Eternal? Here the loftiest genius must fail; on this rock even a Milton was shipwrecked. If however the purest, the most fervent sentiments of religion can inspire aught meet to be laid on such a shrine, Klopstock was not unworthy of the privilege. Never did poet more completely identify himself with his subject. It was, not the desire for earthly fame that inspired his muse. To sing the praises of his Redeemer, to celebrate the mighty work of salvation was in his eyes a reward far above all the world could bestow. "How happy shall I be",

he wrote to Bodmar, "if I can contribute something towards the honour of our Divine faith". Like that most charming and pious of artists Fra Angelico Beato, he regarded his works as so many tributes of homage to the most High, and never commenced without praying that a blessing might attend them. Like him too, the firm conviction that all he composed was under the immediate inspiration of the Eternal filled him with a certain self-confidence, far removed from presumption, which prevented his altering anything he had once committed to paper.

The plan of the "Messiah" is too well known to require any detailed account. The personages introduced in addition to the Supreme Being and the Saviour are the angels Gabriel, Eloah and Urim, the fallen Seraph Abbadona, Satan and his attendant Spirits, the Disciples, the High-priest, the Virgin, the Pharisees, Saducees, Lazarus, Martha, Mary Magdalene, and two young lovers, Selmar and Sidli who, having been resuscitated, banish from their mutual affection every tinge of earthly passion and devote themselves to prayer and praise. Still it must be confessed in the words of Madame de Staël, that "a certain degree of monotony results from a subject so continually elevated, the soul is fatigued by too much contemplation and, the author occasionally requires readers already resuscitated like Sidli and Selmar". Abbadona is a beautiful creation. Seduced by Satan, he has, in a fatal moment, rebelled against his Maker; but that rebellion is followed by undying remorse, ceaseless repentance, and sufferings of the soul which render him utterly insensible to all outward torments.

Thus do we behold him for the first time. We render the passage in blank verse; for despite the merits of Cowper's translation of Homer, and of Longfellow's "Evangeline", we cannot but regard the introduction of the hexameter into English poetry as a bold and not very successful experiment, which we, at least, have not the courage — perhaps not the skill to adopt.

Beneath the throne in silence and in gloom  
Unutterable, Abbadona sat —  
The fallen seraph. On the fatal past  
He mused, and on the future gloomier still.  
Before his view — for ever shrouded now  
In darkness, shame and sorrow — slowly rose  
The awful vision of eternal doom,  
Of torments heaped on torments ne'er to end.  
And then he thought upon the blissful hours  
When he was pure and guiltless, and beloved  
By the bright seraph, who upon that day  
Of fell rebellion, had achieved a deed  
Angels record with pride! Who undeterr'd  
By taunt or menace, dared and dared alone  
To leave the rebel host and stand by God!  
He too might have been saved; but Satan's car  
Rushing with thundering sound to bear him on  
To fancied victory, — the trumpet blast  
Promising triumph — the ecstatic dream  
Of Godhead — all combined with fatal spell  
To drag him to perdition!

Satan calls on his spirits to exert their utmost skill and craft in effecting the destruction of the Messiah. The proposal is received with acclamation.



Like falling rocks they stamp with mighty tread,  
Until hell's lowest depths return the sound.

Abbadona alone raises his voice in opposition, but in vain. The prince of Evil and his confederates proceed to earth, to execute their fell design; Abbadona follows them in the distance, in the faint hope of perhaps dissuading them from their purpose. Arrived at the gates of hell he finds them guarded by two seraphs with flaming swords, who however by divine command permit Satan and his satellites to issue forth. But Abbadona pauses, overwhelmed with emotion; for in one of these seraphs he recognises his former friend Abdiel.

Sighing he cast his eyes to earth, anon  
Resolved to approach; anon he turned to fly,  
And plunge once more into the accursed depths  
Of endless night. His feet refused their aid.  
Torn with remorse and anguish there he stood,  
Until with sudden resolution armed  
Towards him he stepped. His trembling heart beat quick.  
While silent tears as angels only weep  
Bedewed his furrow'd cheeks. Sighs, bursting sighs  
Drawn from the depths of his repentant soul  
Shook all his trembling frame; but Abdiel's eye  
Gazed forth unmoved upon the universe,  
Work of that God whom he so truly served,  
But did not gaze on him. Like the bright sun,  
Like the soft breath of spring that sheds on earth  
Its balmy blessings, shone the seraph's glance,  
But not on Abbadona did it shine.

Here we find one line :

"Tears as angels only weep"

copied almost word for word from "Paradise Lost", and indeed throughout the whole passage Klopstock seems to have had the glorious description of Satan in his mind's eye. Of all the *dramatis personæ* Abbadona plays the most important part and his deep fervent undying penitence is admirably sustained. Until the very last canto we are left in doubt as to the final doom of the repentant seraph; nay at times we are led to believe that it is unchangeably fixed. But Klopstock's kindly nature, like that of our own Burns, revolted at so terrible a thought. According to his milder creed, sincere and lasting penitence, seeking less for remission of its doom than for the pardon and pity of the divine Being offended, can never be in vain. At the great day of judgement Abbadona is forgiven. This idea has been censured as profane. Yet who shall dare to limit the mercy of the Creator?

The verses in which the seraph is restored to heaven are among the most beautiful in the whole poem. The day of judgement has arrived, the inhabitants of earth have been called up to receive their final doom, the spirits of Hell to listen to the terrible sentence which condemns them to everlasting perdition. Among these spirits is Abbadona. Overwhelmed with unceasing remorse, he has hitherto been insensible to bodily tortures. Conscious of the full extent of his awful sin, he has not even dared to dream of mercy. But now as he listens to the voice of the Saviour of mankind at once so fearful and so gentle, a faint ray of hope flashes across his soul. With a glance of unutterable anguish he thus addresses the Redeemer of the world:

Let me but gaze upon thee once again,  
 Gaze even through the tears these burning eyes,  
 Since earth was formed, have never ceased to shed.  
 From yonder throne of glory, cast one glance —  
 Thou too hast suffered — on my misery,  
 On the most wretched being thy hand has formed.  
 I do not dare thy pardon to implore;  
 Destruction is the only boon I ask.  
 A thousand bolts lay round thee; seize but one,  
 And for the sake of thine almighty love  
 In mercy strike me dead! Banish at once  
 From thy creation guilt so deep as mine,  
 And let my very name be heard no more.  
 Or if indeed this be too great a boon,  
 And can I hope for aught? — If I *must* live  
 From the accursed sever'd — let me here,  
 Here on this awful spot remain alone.  
 Amid my tortures, one sweet thought at least  
 Will cheer the undying gloom, and ease my pain;  
 Yonder did I behold the Saviour's face,  
 Here the redeemed soared on wings of light,  
 To bliss ineffable!

After these words, Abbadona sinks insensible to  
 the ground. He is roused from his momentary trance,  
 by the voice of the Judge who reminds him that he  
 is eternal, and that eternal must be his sufferings.

Abbadona bows down in mute despair, when after  
 a long and solemn silence he hears the joyful words —

Come! Abbadona come to thy Redeemer:

. . . . .  
 Then, swift as borne upon the tempest's wings,  
 The seraph soared on high. Scarce had he breathed  
 Celestial air, when once again his form  
 Assumed angelic beauty, and his eyes

Resting on God, beamed forth with light divine.  
 - No longer could Abdiel restrain his joy;  
 With arms outstretch'd, he rushed towards the being  
 He loved so well; his cheeks glowed with delight,  
 Trembling with bliss he sank upon the breast  
 Of the forgiven; but from that glad embrace  
 The seraph tore himself, and lowly sunk  
 Before the Judge's throne. On every side  
 Arose the sound of weeping—blissful sound.

Despite the obvious beauties of these lines, large portions of the poem might be expunged with advantage. The speeches are either inordinately long, or every moment interrupted, because the speakers declare the impossibility of describing what they have undertaken to describe (1).

"In this epic" observes Herder, "there is too much scaffolding and too little edifice, too much talking and too little action. How much may be taken away without injury, nay with advantage! He who does not know Jesus already through the Gospel, will not learn to know him in all his glory from this poem." "All" continues this distinguished but severe critic "is beautiful in parts; but faulty as a whole" (2).

The judgement of posterity has ratified that of Herder.

The grand aim and end of Klopstock's existence as a poet were now fulfilled; henceforth he devoted himself, heart and soul, to his second love, his

(1) Wilmor, Geschichte der deutschen Literatur, Vol. II.

(2) Herder's kritische Bilder.

fatherland and to his long-cherished design of improving its literature and language. With this aim, he commenced a work entitled: "The Republic of Learned Men", in which his favorite ideas were embodied. Goethe in his "Dichtung und Wahrheit" observes, with respect to this work: — "He advances on the stage in the complete costume of the German middle ages, with the air of a law-giver; often laconic, even to obscurity; and expects that the reader should understand a hint, because he knows that it is worth the trouble of understanding. But he expected too much of his contemporaries." He also hoped to prove by his example that authors could be independent of publishers; and accordingly announced his new work by subscription. The universal respect and admiration which encircled his name, the interest attached to every thing which came from his pen, rendered this measure — a novel one in Germany — completely successful. But when the first volume of the "German Republic" actually appeared, even literary men were puzzled as to whether it was to be interpreted in a literal or allegorical sense, and the public did not know what to make of it. Still, though neither understood nor appreciated, it did not in the least injure the reputation of the writer. In 1774, he received an invitation from the Margrave of Bavaria to visit him at Karlsruhe. He accepted it; and his whole journey was a series of triumphs. Respect, love and reverence accompanied his every step: even those who did not share in the enthusiastic admiration so generally inspired by his "Messiah", honoured in him the living genius of

their country, the restorer of her poetic fame. It was at Göttingen, however, that the warmest the most touching homage awaited him from that youthful band of poets of whom he was the idol — Bürger, Hölty, the Schlegels, the Stolbergs and all those young and ardent spirits who composed the "Hainbund". Klopstock's residence at Karlsruhe was not long, and he returned to Hamburg which, as the birth-place of his beloved Meta, was invested in his eyes with a peculiar charm.

As the "German Republic" had evidently been a failure, Klopstock did not attempt a second volume; but he still continued to pursue his task of arousing his countrymen to a fuller appreciation of the beauties of their hitherto neglected language. In 1779 appeared his fragments on "Poetry and Literature", and shortly afterwards his "Grammatical Conversations", in which he gives many highly important hints on the use and structure of the German tongue. Nor did these pursuits so engross his attention as to render him insensible to matters of wider and deeper interest. Alive to all that concerned human happiness, burning with as ardent a love of freedom as ever inspired bard or patriot, the American war of independence had roused his sympathies, and it may be easily imagined with what intense interest he regarded the outbreak of that mightier revolution which was to change the whole face of Europe.

At first, except to the very few clear-sighted, the bright side of the picture alone presented itself. The time seemed at hand when right was at length to triumph over might, when all the glorious dreams

of a golden age were to be realized; and Klopstock may be pardoned, if with so many others he yielded to the delusion. Nothing more clearly proves the extent of his enthusiasm than the fact of its throwing even his patriotism into the shade, as is evident from the following ode.

THE STATES-GENERAL 1779.

The day of Gallia's liberty has dawn'd,  
And mingled hope and fear thrill every heart.  
Arise in all thy splendour, glorious sun!  
Whose advent hath surpassed our fondest hopes.  
Blessed be ye my silver hairs! and bless'd  
The youthful strength that sixty winters past  
Still hath been granted me; for thanks to these  
I have survived to hail this glorious day.

When the crimes and follies of the French revolution had destroyed these hopes, he hesitated whether he should include this and some other odes on the same subject all written in terms of the highest panegyric, in his collected works. But on reflection he resolved to leave them as they were.

The French government did not fail to remark the liberal tendencies of the German patriarch, and in 1772 the National Assembly sent him the diploma of citizen. This honour was accepted by Klopstock with unconcealed satisfaction. So firm, indeed, was his belief in the ultimate triumph of moderation and wisdom, despite the transitory excesses not unnatural to new-born liberty, that even the attack on the Tuileries on the 10<sup>th</sup> of August, and the massacres of September, while filling him with indignation and

horror, did not entirely dispel the dream; while the decree of the 24<sup>th</sup> of May, in which the French declared their resolution not to commence a war of conquest and pronounced the abolition of slavery, seemed to justify the sympathies which bound him to the new republic.

In his ode "Freiheitskrieg" he expressed his opposition to the attack on republican France, with a warmth and boldness which would scarcely have been pardoned save to his age and universal reputation. This ode he sent the Duke of Brunswick with a warning letter; but as might have been expected the poet's voice was drowned amid the clang and clash of arms.

But too soon the hopes which Klopstock had so pertinaciously continued to nourish were dashed to the ground for ever. The crimes which stained the holy name of freedom did not however render him insensible to the value of freedom itself, and while he turned with shuddering from the guilt and horrors which darkened the sunny dawn of the revolution, he never ceased to revere the holy principle in the name of which they were committed.

In the year 1802, the French National Institute elected Klopstock one of its members. He was at this period sixty seven years of age; but time seemed to have passed him by unscathed, and the youthfulness of his soul communicated itself to his corporeal frame. With the exception of the attachment we have already mentioned, his heart had remained insensible to female charms since the death of Meta. But with advancing years the desire for that devoted tenderness



which a wife only can bestow became stronger and stronger. Frau von Wideman beneath whose roof he had resided for many years was now a widow. Though so much younger than Klopstock, she was both proud and happy to gladden the evening of his days. That the wife of his youth was not even then after three and thirty years forgotten, is evident from the ode "Das Grab" which he wrote at this period, and from another "Das Wiedersehen", in which he looks forward with touching tenderness to a reunion in a better world. Still young in mind, with every faculty in the highest degree of preservation, the remaining years of Klopstock's long life glided calmly and cheerfully away, amid domestic ties and endearments, constant occupation and tender, though mournful, recollections. Alive, as ever, to the beauties of nature and of art, ready as of yore to promote every scheme of innocent enjoyment, he passed tranquilly on, revered and beloved by all around him. In May 1802 he was seized with a violent attack of illness from which he never entirely recovered; and died without pain in his seventy-seventh year, March the 3<sup>rd</sup> 1803. All the friends of his youth had gone before him. Another generation had sprung up; younger, and still brighter names had dimmed though not eclipsed his fame, by the dawning splendour of their own; but he was still regarded with respect, nay veneration, no less as a poet, than a man. His obsequies were celebrated with almost regal honours. He was followed to the tomb by all the ambassadors then at Hamburg and by the greater part of the population. It was the tribute of a grateful nation, to him

who had raised its name, in the poetical annals of Europe, to a height it had hitherto deemed unattainable, and had pioneered the way for still more glorious successors. The song of Mary, over the sepulchre of the Redeemer, in the 14<sup>th</sup> canto of the "Messiah" was read over his grave. He sleeps beside the wife of his youth, and long afterwards his tomb was regarded as a hallowed spot to which many a German enthusiast bent his pilgrimage. <sup>(1)</sup>

"Klopstock" observes Menzel <sup>(2)</sup>, "loses everything when he is examined too minutely and in detail. He must be regarded at a distance and as a whole. While we are reading him, he often strikes us as wearisome and pedantic; when we have finished our perusal, and recal his work to our recollection, he appears great and majestic — then his leading ideas, religion and country — stand forth in bold relief and impress us with a sentiment of awe and admiration. We fancy we behold one of Ossian's giant spirits, striking a mighty harp in the air. If we approach him too nearly, he melts away in thin vapour. But that first impression has acted powerfully on the mind; though too cold and metaphysical, he has still given us important lessons; that poetry long estranged from its native soil must once more strike its roots deep into its mother earth, if it wish to rise to a stately tree, and that it should find its noblest aim, its highest inspiration, in religion." It is doubtful, however, whether

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(1) *Leben von Klopstock*, von Döring. — *Klopstock und seine Freunde*.

(2) *Menzel, Geschichte deutscher Literatur*. Vol. I.

the form the author has selected be that best fitted to accomplish his purpose.

The admirers of Klopstock have often instituted comparisons between the "Messiah" and the three great epic poems the "Iliad", the "Divina Commedia" and the "Paradise Lost".

How any resemblance can be discovered between the work of the German poet and that of the immortal Greek it is not easy to imagine. The characteristics of the "Iliad" are unity of plan and a series of incidents of the most striking and animating nature, of all that can move, excite and thrill the heart. With the "Messiah" it is diametrically opposite. The action is always languid; the incidents are necessarily few, and the merit of the work consists in the beauties of description, and the pure, lofty tone which pervades it throughout. With respect to the "Divina Commedia", the same observations hold good. The "Messiah" is equal, nay perhaps superior in sublimity of conception; but it is far below it in execution, in that wonderful truthfulness of detail, which lends such an air of reality to the wildest and most grotesque scenes of the "Inferno", and in the sweetness and harmony of verse which shed a charm over even the "Paradiso" and redeem its comparative monotony.

Between the "Messiah" and the "Paradise Lost" there appears at first sight more resemblance. Both have touched a mighty chord. The one has sung the fall of man, the other, his redemption; of the two, the latter would seem the loftier and purer theme, the fuller of inspiration.

But if, in subject, the poems bear some analogy, in the mode of treatment of these subjects, they widely differ. In sublimity, in power, in grandeur, Klopstock is in every way so inferior to Milton as scarcely to admit of a parallel. The angels of Milton unite to the seraphic sweetness of angelic natures the grandeur of superior beings. The angels of Klopstock are loving creatures, full of grace and tenderness, but wanting in energy, power and vigour. But it is in the description of the infernal abode, and of the lost spirits who people it, that the difference of the two poets and the inferiority of Klopstock is most apparent. The fallen angels of Milton are "not less than archangels ruined". Those of Klopstock are only ordinary wicked men. Even the "Paradisæ Regained" if inferior to the "Paradise Lost" is still, in point of sustained grandeur and sublimity, far above the "Messiah". Herder, with his usual critical acuteness, felt and observed this difference. "We are accustomed", he says "to call Klopstock the German 'Milton': I wish they were never mentioned together, and that Klopstock had never read Milton. Both have written sacred poems, but their muse is not the same. They stand opposite each other, like Moses and Christ in the old and new Testament. Milton's poem is a building resting on mighty pillars; Klopstock's a magic picture, hovering between heaven and earth, amid the tenderest emotions and most moving scenes of human nature. Milton's is as manly as his measure. Klopstock's is tenderer". (1)

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(1) Herder's Works Vol. 7th, p. 391.

If Klopstock can be compared with any English poet, it is rather Wordsworth than Milton, and indeed, despite the obvious superiority of the English bard, many points of analogy present themselves. They resemble each other in severe purity of language, in sensibility and simple pathos, in truth of delineation, loftiness of conception and high sense of moral beauty. They resemble each other in those defects which all, save his blind admirers, must acknowledge in the great British poet; in diffuseness and inequality, in want of sustained action and interest; in occasional inflation and in undue blending of the little and the great.

Nowhere indeed has the German bard passages of such exquisite beauty as those which so often flash upon us in Wordsworth's productions. His love of nature, though deep and sincere, was not, as with Wordsworth, a part and portion of his being. It did not lead him into the same intimate acquaintance with her haunts; to that passionate and reverential admiration for her in all her forms, which pervades the verse of the bard of Rydal. He was a less profound thinker, a more perfect believer. Love of poetry in Klopstock was always subordinate to a still higher purpose, the praise and glory of God.

In the circumstances of their career there are likewise some points of resemblance. Both — in common indeed with so many others — had to struggle with many difficulties — both were poor, and their existence was dependent on their personal exertions; both proposed to themselves as the aim of that existence the composition of one great poem, a poem which should hand down their name to succeeding

ages; both were the founders of a new school; both were strong in the conviction of their poetical mission and persevered unwearied, despite every obstacle. Klopstock's success was more immediate. Wordsworth's more lasting. The former had the triumph of beholding his poem hailed with a rapturous applause, which far greater works have failed to excite; the latter had for years to contend with scorn and neglect.

But Klopstock's fame had already lost some of its brightness ere the termination of his long career, while that of Wordsworth at length pierced the clouds that obscured it, and shines forth with enduring lustre.

That this difference is principally owing to the superior merits of the latter, cannot be doubted. On the other hand, it must be remembered that while Wordsworth, one of the last of that galaxy of genius which illumined the commencement of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, has had no rival to eclipse his fame, Klopstock was succeeded by those brighter stars which rose almost simultaneously on the German horizon. The difference of the metre selected by each poet must be taken into consideration. The hexameter which his love and reverence for classic lore induced Klopstock to prefer to every other, is, we venture to maintain, despite its adoption by Goethe, not much better suited to the genius of the German language than to that of our own; and many a passage in the "Messiah" and still more in the odes appears dull, heavy and prolix, which in a more melodious metre would still delight the ear. In justice to the "Messiah" nevertheless, we must not omit

observing that it was the favorite study of Beethoven, and he preferred it to almost every other German poem, even to Goethe's. "You may laugh as you will," he says in a letter to — "at my having read Klopstock from beginning to end; I have carried him about with me for years; I confess I did not always understand him; he springs about so. He is perpetually falling from the loftiest heights to the lowest depths, always Maestoso or D flat. Is it not so? But he is great and elevates the soul; and where I do not fully comprehend his meaning, I pretty well guess it". — A poem which could delight the ear of a Beethoven, so attuned to the purest and loftiest harmony, cannot be utterly deficient even in that order of merit.

Klopstock's odes we have already noticed.

His dramatic poems are scarcely worth attention, for he was completely destitute of all that constitutes dramatic genius. His "Death of Adam", his "Solomon", his "David", are utterly devoid of interest, whether human or divine, and the *dramatis personæ* drag their weary length along without uttering a word, or expressing a thought which can awake the sympathy of the reader.

But whatever the individual merits of Klopstock's poetry, it must not be forgotten how deeply the German language is indebted to him, for the impulse which he gave to the national literature. "He", observes Menzel, "taught his nation that, if they wished to imitate the Greeks, they must learn, like them, to honour their native land and language. On these two subjects turn his principal poems: they have obtained for him that reverence which he will

ever maintain. It is on their account that he is admired, even by those who are scarcely able to read his works through."

With this observation we will bid adieu to the man who, must always command our respect, even when our literary sympathies are wanting.

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## CHAPTER II.

### LESSING.

CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH. — THE SCHOOL AT MEISSEN. — LOVE OF THEATRICAL PURSUITS. — ACQUAINTANCE WITH MENDELSON AND NICOLAI. — FIRST DRAMATIC ATTEMPTS. — MISS SARA SAMPSON. — THE LAOCOON. — DEPARTURE FOR HAMBURGH AS SUPERINTENDENT OF THE THEATRE. — THE DRAMATURGIE. — BRIEF REVIEW OF THE GERMAN DRAMA. — LESSING'S EFFORTS TO REGENERATE IT. — HIS ATTACKS ON FRENCH DRAMATIC AUTHORS. — OBSERVATIONS. — MINNA VON BARNHELM. — QUARREL WITH KLOTZ. — LESSING GIVES UP THE SUPERINTENDENCE OF THE THEATRE. — DESPERATE STATE OF HIS AFFAIRS. — IS APPOINTED LIBRARIAN AT WOLFENBÜTTEL. — REMOVAL THITHER. — CONTROVERSY WITH GÖTZ. — EMILIA GALOTTI. — JOURNEY TO ITALY. — DISAPPOINTMENT AND UNHAPPY STATE OF MIND. — RETURN TO GERMANY. — MARRIAGE AND ITS FAVORABLE INFLUENCE. — DEATH OF WIFE. — LESSING'S GRIEF. — NATHAN THE WISE. — LESSING'S DECLINING HEALTH. — HIS RELIGIOUS DOUBTS. — HIS DEATH. — CRITICAL OBSERVATIONS ON HIS LIFE AND WORKS.

In striking contrast to Klopstock, inferior in all poetical attributes, but immeasurably superior in variety of powers, vigour of intellect, in sound, critical acumen, is Ephraim Lessing. Klopstock had depicted

beings of his own creation far above the ordinary standard of mortality. Lessing drew men like ourselves, with human faults and frailties, in positions in which his readers found or might find themselves every day of their lives. "He knew man", says Gervinus, "and life in all its varied forms better even than Goethe himself."

Ephraim Lessing was born the 27<sup>th</sup> of January 1729 at Kamentz in Saxony. His father, a clergyman of sincere and somewhat rigid piety, himself superintended his early education, and to him he was indebted for the foundation of his many and diversified acquirements. It was the elder Lessing's earnest desire that his son should adopt the clerical profession, and he sedulously endeavoured to impress his young mind, not only with respect for the sacred calling; but with the same fervent devotion for which he was himself remarkable. The bible was the boy's first book, and at the age of seven or eight years he was already tolerably well versed in its contents. Passionately fond of reading, he cared but little for the ordinary sports of childhood, and when an artist proposed painting him with a bird on his hand, he indignantly refused, declaring he would be painted with a heap of books or not at all. In 1741, he quitted the paternal roof for the free school at Meissen. This establishment was regulated by the strictest monastic rules; but these were not irksome to Lessing, accustomed from childhood to regular discipline and daily religious exercises. Here he made such rapid progress, particularly in his classical studies, as to attract the favourable notice of his instructors. In

September 1796, he quitted this seminary with a knowledge of Greek and Latin, superior to almost any other youth of his age in Germany.

As Lessing still intended entering the church, he proceeded to the university of Leipsic to pursue his theological studies. Nothing could present a greater contrast than the spot on which he now found himself, and that he had just quitted. Leipsic was then, as now, one of the least picturesque, but busiest of German towns. The bustle of its streets, the mercantile spirit of its inhabitants, the boisterous mirth and the somewhat uproarious habits of the students were all so opposed to the school at Meissen, to the solemnity of the masters and the gravity of the pupils, that Lessing was at first positively bewildered. Gradually, however, he became habituated to these new scenes, and insensibly found both his tastes and character modified by their influence. His affection and respect for his father, and his desire to gratify his wishes, had in fact decided his choice of a profession. Accustomed to see that father revered by all who approached him, despite his narrow circumstances, he had learned to regard the profession of a clergyman as the best and happiest on earth. Educated in the strictest religious principles, he was utterly unacquainted with the world, its pleasures and its seductions. There was nothing in the duties of a Protestant Pastor to appal the imagination. Indeed, the idea had become so firmly rooted in his mind, that he had hitherto regarded it as an event no less inevitable than desirable. But all these feelings were the result of circumstances alone. Lessing's nature, though good and pure, was not susceptible of

religious enthusiasm. On the contrary, as the sequel shows, it was diametrically opposed to that tendency. Hitherto he had never doubted, because his religious opinions like every other, had been taken pretty well on trust, and he had been so much occupied in acquiring knowledge as to have neither time nor opportunity to weigh conflicting theories. His daily pursuits had been too strictly marked out to require, or indeed to admit of much exercise of the reasoning powers. He had passed quietly, but so far as the nobler faculties of his mind were concerned, almost dreamily through the period of early youth. He now stood on the threshold of manhood, and he suddenly awoke to a consciousness of his own individuality. This will account for the extraordinary change which his conduct soon presented; meanwhile, the transition state was not free from inconveniences and incongruities. He soon abandoned the study of theology and almost every other; for he either felt, or affected, the utmost contempt for the Leipsic professors. It must be owned, indeed, that they were by no means the first of their class, with the exception of Kästner, professor of mathematics, whose course of lectures Lessing sedulously attended. At other times he was to be found anywhere rather than at college. So far as classical learning was concerned, he had but little to acquire, and wearied perhaps by the close study and restraint which had been his lot from childhood, he now plunged almost recklessly into the pleasures of a society very different from the austere halls of Meissen, or the simple parsonage of Kamentz. He frequented clubs, debating societies both political

and philosophical, and was remarked alike for his originality and acuteness. Among his favourite companions, was Weisse, a man of considerable attainments and no contemptible dramatic author. By him he was led into the society of the most celebrated actors of the day, and soon contracted a taste for theatrical amusements, strongly in contrast with his early education. Mad<sup>me</sup> Neuber, then manager of the Leipsic theatre, and possessed of considerable personal charms, was attracted by the agreeable manners and evident talents of the young student. She admitted him to her intimacy; perhaps to something more; at all events she acquired so great an influence over his mind that he was continually at her side, and resolved henceforth to devote himself to dramatic compositions and the stage. About this period, an intimate friend of his father happened to call on him. He found him in the company of some comedians of no very reputable character, and reported the circumstance to the elder Lessing. The theatre, and every thing connected with it, was regarded by the pastor and his wife with devout horror. The former, whose own life had been passed in complete retirement, and in the strictest exercise of his clerical functions, had little indulgence for the follies of youth. He wrote to his son in the severest terms, bidding him renounce connexions equally dangerous to his peace and reputation. Unluckily this mandate arrived the very day that Lessing — not without some qualms of conscience — had fixed, to make his first appearance on the stage.

What was to be done? He had never disobeyed the letter of his father's injunctions, though lately he had not always adhered to their spirit. His costume, on which he had expended no small portion of his slender funds, lay before him; he had just tried it on, had seen how well it became him, and rejoiced in the thought of the effect it would produce on the audience and on Mad<sup>me</sup> Neuber.

The struggle was long and severe; for we learn from an old work on the Hamburg theatre, whence we gather these details, that it was so late ere he made his appearance, that Mad<sup>me</sup> Neuber became uneasy and sent to enquire what had become of him. But at last, inclination triumphed over filial duty. He threw the letter into the fire, and fulfilled his engagement. His talents as an actor, however, do not seem to have been of a very high order. At all events his débüt, though not an utter failure, did not answer the expectations of his friends or his own. He elicited little applause, and returned to his humble lodgings mortified and dispirited. While under the influence of these feelings, he received a letter from home bidding him return instantly, if he wished to see his mother alive. All Lessing's filial affection revived at this intelligence. It was the depth of winter, and the cold unusually intense; but he set off instantly, travelled all night, and reached the paternal roof almost frozen; in such a state of exhaustion, indeed, as to excite the alarm of his mother, whose illness, it appears, was not quite so serious as had been reported. A complete reconciliation ensued. Lessing promised to abandon all idea of becoming a

comedian, and to devote himself to the study of medicine, which was more congenial to his taste than theology or jurisprudence.

It was perhaps fortunate for the youth, that he was stopped in the commencement of a career which would probably have ended in disappointment and disgust. As it was, the payment of the debts he had incurred during his brief theatrical essay had nearly exhausted his slender finances, and he found himself in no little embarrassment. Under these circumstances, instead of pursuing his studies at Leipsic, he resolved to repair to Berlin and endeavour to support himself by writing essays, making translations from the French and English languages, and in short doing any thing the booksellers would give him to do; unluckily that was but little. Poverty soon stared him in the face. Conscious that he had not kept his promise to his father, he long hesitated to apply for assistance from home. Necessity, however, overcame his repugnance. With the secret conviction of genius, he declared himself certain of making his way in the world and winning an honorable name, if a little timely aid were but afforded. This tone, at once so calm and confident, somewhat reassured his anxious parents. His father once more taxed his scanty purse to the utmost to relieve him, and Lessing, touched and grateful, applied himself with new resolution to the task of authorship which was henceforth to be his sole vocation.

He now published his essays on the "History of the Theatre". They are however dry and uninteresting, and form, as one of his biographers expresses it, a mere

theatrical catechism. <sup>(1)</sup> Undismayed by the cold reception of this first attempt, Lessing soon afterwards gave forth his poems, which, although wanting in all the higher attributes of genius, had sufficient wit and originality to attract attention. While at Berlin he made the acquaintance of de Louvain, secretary to Voltaire, then the flattered and courted guest of the Prussian monarch. Louvain had no very great talents; but his heart was good, his manners agreeable, and Lessing soon became attached to him. As may be supposed, one of the principal subjects of conversation was the Frenchman's gifted master. Voltaire had just completed his "Siècle de Louis XIV", of which twenty-four copies were to be sent to the king, previous to the work's being placed in the hands of the bookseller. Dispatch was necessary, and Lessing offered his services in the selection of the most exquisitely printed copies, only requesting permission to take them home for examination, and promising to return them in three days at most. Unluckily he suffered himself to be persuaded by an intimate acquaintance, to lend him the volumes for a few hours, on his solemn promise of the most complete secrecy. The treacherous friend showed the production to the Countess of Bentinck, one of Voltaire's warmest admirers, who, offended at finding a stranger permitted to read the work of her idol sooner than herself, complained to the author of what she called his want of confidence. Voltaire's indignation may be imagined. De Louvain summoned to his presence,

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(1) *Wegler, Geschichte der deutschen Literatur.*



and overwhelmed with angry reproaches, hastened to Lessing to demand the treasure he had entrusted to his care. Lessing, with unpardonable thoughtlessness, had set off on a journey and was not expected back for two or three days. This circumstance naturally augmented Voltaire's wrath. He accused the young German of having carried off his work with the intention, either of translating it without his permission, or of publishing a spurious edition. A letter, of which every word breathed fire and fury, was instantly dispatched to the culprit, <sup>(1)</sup> who attempted no defence, but frankly avowed his error, alleging only in excuse, that, on quitting Berlin, he had still four pages to read, and that he could not prevail on himself to leave unfinished a work which so deeply interested him. "Why," he exclaims, "is not Mr. de Voltaire like so many compilers whose books we care not to finish, because they are sure to weary us wherever we read them?"

This compliment did not disarm the enraged poet. De Louvain was dismissed, and Lessing feeling himself the cause of his disgrace, was almost in despair at the result of his indiscretion. To his infinite relief, his friend obtained a post which more than indemnified him for what he had lost, that of secretary to Prince Henry of Prussia which he retained till his death. <sup>(2)</sup>

Shortly after this event Lessing left Berlin for Wittenberg, where he passed the degree of Master of Arts.

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<sup>(1)</sup> *Leben von Lessing*, von G. Lessing. p. 128.

<sup>(2)</sup> *Danzel's Leben von Lessing*. — *Lessing's Leben* von G. Lessing &c.

Here he pursued his scientific and literary studies with the utmost assiduity; but does not seem to have produced anything worth notice, during his residence in that city. On his return to Berlin he made the acquaintance of Mendelsohn and Nicolai, who became and continued his warmest and most intimate friends. For Mendelsohn<sup>(1)</sup> in particular, he felt the deepest attachment, aiding him in the developement of his mental powers and supporting him by his sympathy and encouragement.

From Berlin, Lessing proceeded to Leipsic, then to Breslau, and once more returned to Berlin in 1765, when his "Miss Sara Sampson", which had been written some time previously, was brought on the stage. This may be considered as the commencement of the German national drama, albeit the dull sermonizing tone which pervades it, renders it somewhat wearisome to modern readers. Its success at the time, however, was prodigious, and it at once gave Lessing a high place among the dramatic authors of the age. It was translated into French, performed at the private theatricals of the Duke de Luines, at St. Germain, and eulogized in one of the most influential journals of the day. "It is possible", said the writer, no other than Diderot, "that art may have considerable progress to make in Germany; but genius

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(1) Moses Mendelsohn was the son of poor Jewish parents, and, by his own almost unaided efforts raised himself to the rank of one of the most distinguished philosophical writers of his day. Nicolai, was a celebrated bookseller, a man of considerable talent and great acuteness.

has there taken the great road to nature, which we cannot but exhort others to follow. Truth, even en negligé, will always interest more than the most studied artifice."

"Lessing", observes the same journal, "has infinite wit and invention. This poet has enjoyed a reputation in France for many years, and his tragedy "Miss Sara Sampson" has stamped him as a man of genius. Mr. Trouvel de Montigny, Intendant of the finances, has translated the piece which has had great success in Paris, though the translator has communicated it only in manuscript, and would not permit it to be printed". In this, as in so many other things, posterity, however, has not ratified the opinion of Diderot. "Miss Sara Sampson" is never performed and almost forgotten.

A work of a very different character, of an importance far superior, was the "Laocoon". It is remarkable no less from its intrinsic merit, than from the interest of the subject of which it treats. The idea was suggested by "Winkelman's History of Art", to the opinions of which however it is often diametrically opposed. With an eloquence worthy of his theme, but not always supported by sound reasoning or close logic, Winkelman had sought to prove that in the glorious relics of antiquity and in these alone, art really existed or could exist. Lessing was a warm admirer of the ancients; but he steadily refused to admit a maxim so fatal to all originality of design, to all native force of imagination.

The "Laocoon" produced an effect greater than the author himself had ventured to anticipate. Lessing had never visited the classic haunts, whence Winkelman had drawn his inspiration. He had not yet beheld that

marvellous creation which forms the subject of his work. He knew it only from models or from copper-plates. But his mind had so completely identified itself with its subject, that it is difficult to believe a great part of his life had not been spent in contemplating the wonders of ancient art. The principles he lays down are the same as those afterwards maintained by Schiller and by Goethe, viz: that while the several arts are derived from one great source, each has its separate and natural boundary, within which its efforts, to be successful, must be confined. The style of the "Laocoon" displays all that vivacity, lucidity and earnestness, for which all Lessing's productions are remarkable. But we refer our readers to the work itself, of which there is more than one version in our tongue, our limits forbidding any further notice.

Shortly after the publication of the "Laocoon", Lessing was summoned from Berlin by an offer, no less agreeable than unexpected, that of superintendent of the new theatre just opened at Hamburgh, with a salary of eight hundred<sup>(1)</sup>, some say one thousand thalers, about one hundred and twenty or one hundred and sixty pounds a year.<sup>(2)</sup> In order to explain this singular proposal, we must revert for a moment to the history of the German drama. Its rise and progress we have already traced, from the Mysteries of the 14<sup>th</sup> to the comedies of Godsched in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Despite all his poetic sins, Godsched had ren-

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(1) Schröder's Leben. Vol 1st p. 80.

(2) Gleim's Briefwechsel mit Klop.

dered good service to the stage, not so much by his own productions — very poor affairs at best — as by the importance which his personal character and literary influence lent the theatre, then sunk to the very lowest ebb. At Berlin, at Vienna, at Stuttgart, French and Italian actors were engaged at exorbitant salaries, while the public turned with disdain from every thing that bore the title of German dramatic composition. Gotsched succeeded in banishing, at least to a great degree, the Harlequins, Columbines, and mummery of all descriptions, which had hitherto usurped the place of legitimate scenic art. His sincere desire to effect his darling project overcame for awhile even his proverbial vanity. He attempted no original compositions, but set vigorously about the task of translating, from other languages, plays already favoured by the public. Thus in 1730 the "Dying Cato", a version of Addison's well known tragedy, with additions unfortunately from Gotsched's own pen, was brought out on the Leipsic stage with great applause by Mad<sup>me</sup> Neuber and her company — that very troop in which Lessing had made his brief theatrical essay. Considerable sums were expended on decorations and costumes. "Next Michaelmas", writes Neuber 1737, "our stage will be adorned with new scenery. Rich dresses are being made. Something good must come of it".<sup>(1)</sup>

If, however, Leipsic was the cradle of the modern German drama, it was at Hamburg that it flourished with the greatest vigour. The idea of founding a

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<sup>(1)</sup> Gotsched und seine Zeit, by Dänzel.

national theatre in this wealthy town originated with John Frederick Löwen, better known as a romantic poet of the second order, than as a dramatist. He was aided in the task by John Schöнемann, who with his company appeared in Hamburg about 1750. Among this troop was Eckhoff, a first-rate actor, "the German Garrick", as Schütze calls him,<sup>(1)</sup> Ackermann and his lovely daughter, whose tragic fate has supplied the theme for a novel which enjoys great popularity in Germany,<sup>(2)</sup> and Schröder, the father of the celebrated actress of that name, who later, formed one of the most brilliant stars at the little court of Weimar. Schöнемann and Löwen toiled unremittingly to carry out their arduous enterprise with credit and profit. To a considerable extent they succeeded. Still matters went on but slowly, when in 1766 the idea occurred to them to summon Lessing to their aid. His love for the stage was well known. His "Miss Sara Sampson" had stamped him as an author of no common merit. His critical acumen, his keen wit, his originality of mind, seemed to point him out as the very man they needed, to mould the public taste, to guide and refine the drama, and to lend it that importance in the eyes of Germany and of Europe, in which hitherto it had been so sadly deficient. They required him to compose pieces for the theatre, and to write critical articles on the performers and performances. The first condition Lessing declined; to the second he acceded, promising that his journal should be so

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(1) *Geschichte des Hamburger Theaters.*

(2) *Charlotte Ackermann von Otto Müller.*

conducted as to ensure the success of the enterprise. These terms were accepted, and in January 1767 Lessing set out for his new domicile.

Hamburg was then as now distinguished for its commercial prosperity, for the wealth of its inhabitants and above all for a peculiar love of dramatic performances. "The citizen of Hamburg", says an old writer<sup>(1)</sup>, "is a relic of ancient German virtue. His attire is usually black, but he does not despise the fashions. Both sexes love cleanliness, particularly in their linen. The wealthiest merchant sits from morning to night in his counting-house, as though he had to gain his bread by his exertions. On Sunday only he permits himself a little relaxation, which consists in spending the day at his villa, and walking sedately up and down the well-kept garden rich in flowers of many hues, more particularly in tulips."

"Marriage is a very quiet reasonable affair at Hamburg. The husbands are kind and affectionate, but without any exaggerated tenderness; they allow their wives a share in their wealth and prosperity, but seldom permit them to interfere in their concerns. These wives are chaste and virtuous. They occupy themselves wholly with their household affairs and female duties. They drink tea most assiduously, and pay visits on Sundays to all their acquaintance." "At Hamburg", says an anonymous author, "there is a degree of luxury suited to, and sometimes exceeding the wealth of those who indulge in it,

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(1) Hamburg unter seinen politischen und socialen Verhältnissen von Christian von Griesheimer.

elegant equipages, a numerous household, splendidly furnished apartments, gardens, pavilions like palaces and friendly dinners which would honour a royal table. The expenditure of the wealthy citizen in eating and drinking is enormous. Scarcely have you left the breakfast-table in the morning when a "*de-jéûner à la fourchette*" awaits you with the most exquisite wines and delicious fare. If you are a friend to tea, like most of the inhabitants of Hamburg, at twelve or one o'clock, it stands before you; but dinner is not served till three or even later in the day.<sup>(1)</sup> After coffee a slight collation of ham, cold meat &c. is generally offered. At nine or ten o'clock the company sits down to a well spread table and rich foreign wines. The guests are often at their wit's end where to stow away all the good things they are expected to swallow; yet this must be done or the master of the house considers himself as slighted".

It was to this home of good cheer and hospitality that Lessing directed his steps. He was at this period in his thirty-sixth year, and contemporaries describe him as agreeable in person, and amiable though somewhat excentric in manner. His complexion was florid, his dark blue eyes full of fire, and to use the expression of Voss "with something of the eagle's glance".

As soon as he had settled himself in his new abode, the indefatigable critic commenced his "*Dramaturgie*", a weekly journal in which he poured forth all the long hoarded phials of his wrath on the French drama and dramatists. This was the commencement of the

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(1) The usual dinner hour in Germany was and still is one o'clock.



war he waged so relentlessly against those productions then universally regarded as models of scenic art. "He considered that war", says Gezler, <sup>(1)</sup> "as one of self-defence, a crusade for the glory and honour of his native land in which his whole soul was engaged — in which no quarter could be given till the territory was delivered from the enemy. He regarded French literature in the same light as he would have regarded an invading foe who, by force or craft, had introduced himself into the very heart of the land. Every effort must be directed to drive him forth and the watchword was to be no quarter, till he should be fairly expelled from German soil."

The first and most important blow which this resolute innovator aimed at the omnipotence of Gallic literary dominion, was his attack on the unities. It had been the fashion to regard Corneille, Racine and Voltaire as the continuers of Eschylus. To follow the French was to follow the ancients. Lessing, in terms perhaps somewhat overdrawn, urged the want of nature, of passion, and, above all, of national attributes in the dramas which had hitherto appeared, in German eyes, the highest achievements of human genius. He insisted that they were mere anachronisms from beginning to end; that the heroes and heroines were, for the most part, lords and ladies from Versailles or Marly, transported to Greece, Rome or Troy where they talk and act pretty much as they would have talked or acted at the court of their magnificent master, but very little like those they

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(1) Gezler's Geschichte der neueren deutschen Literatur. Vol. 1st.

are intended to represent. In all this there is a certain degree of truth long since felt and acknowledged in France no less than elsewhere. But Lessing, intentionally perhaps, exaggerated the defects of the French drama, and overlooked those numerous and surpassing beauties by which those defects are so nobly redeemed. The Greeks and Romans of Racine or Corneille may be wanting in nationality of expression and turn of thought; but they excite our sympathy and our interest, for they are men. The poet has depicted the human heart in all its strength and weakness, in colours so true, with skill so exquisite, that we notice the charms of the picture only and forget the defects. We may compare the tragedies of these great masters to the magnificent productions of the Venetian School. The scene indeed is laid in Judæa, in Asia, among the ancient Jews, the Persians or the Greeks. Yet who while gazing on the Cena of Paul Veronese turns aside with disgust, because the Apostles are attired in robes of the 16<sup>th</sup> century? Who while contemplating that most exquisite creation of the painter's art, the family of Darius at the feet of Alexander, pauses to criticise the ermine capes, the stiff bodices, the coiffure powdered with gold of those lovely female forms?

Lessing attacked Voltaire with still greater violence than he had attacked Racine and Corneille, and with greater justice. He contrasted the Orosmanes in "Zaïre" with the "Othello" of Shakespeare, the ghost in "Semiramis" with the apparition in "Hamlet". The same comparison has been instituted more recently

by a still, more eminent critic than Lessing <sup>(1)</sup> and although the author is himself a countryman of Voltaire — with the same conclusions, so great has been the progress of toleration and impartiality in criticism as well as in more important matters since the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. In these qualities it must be owned Lessing was sadly deficient. His zeal for his country's honour, his indignation at her debased literary condition, his passionate desire to exalt her in the scale of nations and to shake off all foreign influence were in secret perhaps the principal grounds of this furious animosity. Even as he had contemptuously passed over or obstinately denied the merits of Corneille or of Racine — the masterly delineation of the Spaniards in the "Cid" to which Schlegel himself has rendered justice, <sup>(2)</sup> the exquisite picture of connubial fidelity and maternal tenderness in "Andromache", of overwhelming passion and deep remorse in "Phedre", even so does he lose sight of the beauties of Voltaire's tragedies. To him "Alzire" has no charms, and while levelling all his shafts of wit and irony at those passages in "Zaire" which unfortunately offer only too fair a mark for ridicule, he deigns not a word of admiration for the noble creation of Nerestan, to the dignity and resignation of Lusignan, to the touching scenes which lend this drama a charm wanting in many of a far loftier order. Lessing's strictures on French dramatic productions were confined to their tragedies. Their comedies he

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(1) Histoire de la littérature du 18<sup>e</sup> siècle par Mr. Villemain.

(2) Schlegel, dramatische Vorlesungen.

condescended to approve and, with better taste and judgement than Schlegel, openly avowed his admiration for Molière, whom he was very fond of quoting. But he did not suffer this predilection to interfere with what he regarded as the most sacred of duties, the destruction of French dramatic supremacy. "I have nothing so much at heart", he says in one of his letters. "No nation has more reversed the rules of ancient tragedy than the French. They have mistaken a few passing remarks of Aristotle on the external arrangement of the stage for that which is really important, and have so weakened the true spirit by all sorts of limitations and interpretations, that the inevitable result has ensued in works, far beneath the high standard on which the philosopher formed his maxims".

If Lessing had confined his innovations to breaking down the unities, and teaching his countrymen to despise "Iphigenia" and the "Cid", his services in the cause of the national drama would not have been very valuable. But he did something better. He pointed out the necessity of widening the range of tragedy. Hitherto, save on the English stage, no sorrows but those of monarchs or princes had been deemed worthy of representation. Lessing opposed this practice as inconsistent with the real spirit of dramatic art. He contended that sympathy is never so freely excited, as for those whose condition is somewhat akin to our own; that if the woes of greater personages move the heart, it is not because they are kings, but because they are men. Doubtless, when the affections or the passions are brought into full play, the rank of the

individual is soon lost sight of. The anguish of the bereaved father, the fury of the betrayed lover are pretty much alike in the prince and in the peasant. Beneath the influence of vehement and overpowering emotions, all social, nay all intellectual distinctions melt away. While shuddering at the wild remorse of Carl Moor, who remembers that he is only the son of a merchant? Who, when thrilling beneath the agonized grief of Belvidera, recalls that she is not sprung from a royal stem? On the other hand it cannot be denied, that the trials and calamities of those lifted far above us, produce, if not a deeper, — at least a more ennobling influence on the mind. They may not draw forth more tears; but they strike us with greater awe and leave an impression more solemn, more profound. We measure the greatness of their sufferings by the greatness of the sufferer. Such at least was the opinion of the ancients, and even Shakespeare himself, has introduced on the tragic scene none save monarchs or heroes. Othello indeed is only a Moor; but he is a valiant warrior, a famous general; Desdemona is the daughter of a Venetian senator, Romeo and Juliet are of noble birth, Richard the third and Macbeth are kings. They are the Atrides, the Achilles, the Iphigenias of Grecian tragedy.

Does all this prove that the woes of meaner men are not fit themes for the stage? Far from it. But these evidently constitute another order of drama.

On the stage, as in real life, existence cannot be made up of those convulsive throes of suffering or of rage, which level all ranks and all understandings.

There must be long intervals of calm, of repose — and it is evident that the general tone of a tragedy in which the principal parts are assigned to men of lowly birth, cannot be so elevated as that in which the actors are sovereigns or statesmen.

Lessing, however, weary of the unvarying dignity, of the stilted grandeur of the French drama, was inclined to rush into the contrary extreme. Fortunately Shakespeare attracted his attention, and struck him at once with mingled admiration and astonishment. All his efforts were henceforth directed to impress his nation with sentiments akin to his own. "We were", he observes in a passage of his "Dramaturgie", "fortunately awakened from our slumber by some English dramas, and we discovered that tragedy is susceptible of quite another species of developement and action than that which Corneille or Racine have given it". "Let us take another model", he adds; "every even the minutest portion of Shakespeare is formed in the same mighty mould as his historical plays, and these, contrasted with the tragedies of French taste, are something like an enormous fresco-painting in comparison with a miniature".<sup>(1)</sup>

This simile, if correct, would not be always to the advantage of our great poet. Lessing seems to have forgotten that the value of a picture depends not on its size, or its style, but on the beauty of the design and the perfection of the details.

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(1) *Dramaturgie*. p. 73.

But while deeply impressed with the inimitable genius of his model, Lessing was not insensible to those defects which all, save the blind idolators of Shakespeare, will acknowledge occasionally disfigure his finest productions. He felt that these which in him are but spots on the sun, would probably assume larger proportions in his German imitators, till, unredeemed by the mighty genius of the original, they would soon become more intolerable than those he was seeking to banish.

Nor was he less anxious to curb and direct those wild and sudden freaks and outbreaks of fancy so frequently mistaken for the flights of genius, into which a nation suddenly emancipated from severe and antiquated rules of criticism is peculiarly liable to fall. "Blinded by the glare of truth," he observes, "we rushed to the very brink of the abyss. People began to declare it pedantry and insolence to prescribe to genius what it ought, or ought not to do. In short we were on the very point of flinging away all the experience of bygone ages, and requiring of each poet to invent the art anew." These words prove how nicely balanced was Lessing's understanding, equally opposed to blind idolatry and wilful innovation. Though his style betrays his careful study of the ancients, still he is thoroughly German. "Every German can so speak and think".<sup>(1)</sup> He rejected with horror that endless stock of foreign words which Frederick the Great had grafted on the national stem

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(1) *Grævius*, vol. 2nd, p. 319.

till to use the language of a modern critic, "it resembled a piece of clumsy embroidery in which the original ground was almost completely hidden by ill matched colours of all shades and hues."<sup>(1)</sup> This excited his indignation to such a degree that in 1769 he thus wrote to Nicolai: "Let Vienna be what it may; I am certain it will flourish better than your Frenchified Berlin", and to Ramler: "you have been ill; but how can one be well in Berlin? Every thing one sees there excites one's gall." At the end of his 'Dramaturgie', he thus expresses himself: "We talk of creating a German theatre. A singular idea when we, Germans, are not a nation! I do not speak of the poetical but only of the moral character. One might almost say that it consists in having none at all. We are still the humble admirers of the never to be sufficiently admired French; every thing that comes to us from the other side of the Rhine is beautiful, lovely, divine. We would sooner lose both sight and hearing than think it otherwise. We would rather mistake insolence for grace, grimace for expression, and mean empty rhyme for poetry, than permit ourselves to doubt in the slightest degree the superiority of this charming people, the first in the world, as it is wont modestly to call itself, or that it has received as its share from a just Providence, all that is good, noble and beautiful."

With these feelings he could not entirely share the enthusiasm of Gleim and Kleist, for their idol Frederick the Great, even at the moment when his

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(1) Geßler, Geschichte der neueren deutschen Literatur.



sword was directed against that very nation whose literary supremacy had excited his patriotic hatred. For ardent as was his desire for national liberty, his zeal for intellectual freedom and glory and what he considered the re-integration of the German people, in their mental rights and privileges, was greater still, and all the hero's merits as the champion of the former, could scarcely induce him to forgive the contempt he manifested for the writers of his native land. It may be doubted however, whether the spirit of Frederick's reign was really as inimical to the progress of literature as has generally been supposed. His tastes might have been French, but his heart and soul were essentially German and by, as we have already observed, elevating his people in the scale of nations and giving them an importance both in their own eyes and those of the rest of Europe to which they had hitherto been strangers, he in fact more than counter-balanced the evil consequences of his avowed scorn for her poets and historians. Frederick indeed actually commenced a work on German literature, and, although it must be confessed he evinces great partiality towards the French and but an imperfect acquaintance with the more modern school, which had already begun to spring up around him, every line proves his deep affection for his country and his desire for her intellectual improvement.

"*Minna von Barnhelm*" which appeared in 1763 is far superior to "*Miss Sara Sampson*". The characters are well drawn, the action rapid and condensed, although we really cannot agree with the exaggerated praises bestowed on it. As it is little known in England,

we venture to give a brief outline of the story. Minna von Barnhelm, young, rich and beautiful, is betrothed to von Tellheim, a major in the Prussian service, but who has been dismissed on a false accusation of embezzlement, and is now lodging at a little inn, where he awaits the final decision of the court to which he has appealed against his sentence. Reduced to the utmost poverty, he is turned out of his chamber by the insolent landlord, to make room for a stranger. This stranger is no other than his affianced bride whom since his misfortunes, in the anguish of a wounded spirit, he has shunned, too proud to accept, poor and dishonoured, the hand he had won when wealthy and courted. But Minna loves him for himself alone. She discovers that he is under the same roof, and summons him to her presence. He obeys, not without reluctance, and the struggle between love and pride is well portrayed. "You believe", he exclaims, "that I am the Tellheim you knew in your native land; the blooming youth, full of high hopes, burning for renown, to whom all the lists of honour and fortune stood open; that is passed. I am Tellheim the dismissed, wounded in his honour — the cripple (his right arm has been disabled by a shot), the beggar." Then fearing lest the love which deep in his secret soul still reigns supreme may overcome even his pride, he rushes from her presence. But Minna is not rebuffed. She seeks another interview. She knows the heart of the brave soldier, and pardons his foibles. At length weary of his obstinacy, she has recourse to stratagem, at once to reform him and to try the truth of his affection. Apparently indignant and

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wounded, she leaves the apartment, when her maid and confidant whispers in the major's ear that he has acted wisely; that his affianced is no longer a rich heiress, having incurred her uncle's displeasure by persisting in her fidelity to him; that she has secretly left the home of her childhood trusting in her lover's truth for her reward. These words change at once the whole current of the major's thoughts. He implores the waiting-woman to plead his cause, and when at her earnest entreaties the lady re-enters the apartment, he throws himself at her feet, beseeches forgiveness, declares that without her life will be a burden. She seems moved and on the very point of pardoning him, when a dispatch arrives from the king with the intelligence that his innocence is proved, that he is reinstated in his former rank and that he may count on speedy promotion. Overjoyed, he turns to share his good fortune with her he loves. But Minna once so fond and tender, assumes the part he lately played. She retorts, almost in his own words, "that the being must be indeed contemptible, who will condescend to owe all she possesses on earth, to the generosity of another." Tellheim reminds her of the difference of sex; but Minna rejects with scorn so poor an argument, and rightly. There is indeed something peculiarly insulting to woman, in that often vaunted but mistaken pride, which refuses to accept the heart of a beloved and loving being, simply because she happens to possess that wealth in which the suitor is deficient. It is tantamount to declaring that woman is in herself so worthless that to owe fortune to her is a disgrace to an honorable

man. Lessing felt the absurdity of such a maxim — a maxim equally refuted by Christianity and philosophy. The best of Roman emperors did not hesitate to wed a woman, who brought him the empire for her dowry, and Jean Jacques Rousseau says with truth, “il vaut mieux devoir sa fortune à son épouse qu’à son ami; car on devient le protecteur de l’une, et le protégé de l’autre, et quoiqu’on puisse dire, un honnête homme n’a jamais de meilleur ami que sa femme.” But we must return to Tellheim whom we left imploring Minna to listen to his excuses. He is still urging his entreaties, when the unexpected appearance of the uncle who is on his way to join his adopted daughter cuts short the dilemma and of course all ends happily.

The frequent allusions to the memorable events of the Seven Years’ war contributed not a little to the immense success obtained by “Minna von Barnhelm”, a success which despite its undeniable merits appears extraordinary on a cool and impartial examination of its claims. The language is generally speaking even more commonplace than its character, as a picture of every day life can warrant. In the serious parts, the expression of feeling is not always free from affectation, and the difficulties of the lovers are carried to a height, quite unnecessary, and almost absurd.

Meanwhile, despite the salary he received for his weekly critical journal, Lessing’s finances were at rather a low ebb. His works had produced but little, and his habits, though not luxurious, were still too expensive for his slender means. He has been

accused of gambling, and it appears he did, in some degree, indulge in this baneful propensity, less from any pleasure he felt in the pursuit, than from the desire to drive away thought. A friend who watched him one evening during the game, observed drops of perspiration pouring down his forehead. On the way home, he represented in forcible terms the risk he was running; that not only his purse but his health were at stake. "On the contrary", replied Lessing, "I play with passion intentionally. The violent emotion sets my frame in movement, and frees me from the weight of bodily suffering, beneath which I am often ready to sink."<sup>(1)</sup> Yet he was not unconscious of the perils to which this unfortunate tendency exposed him. He was weary of his mode of existence, weary of himself and of every one around him. The severe strictures in his "Dramaturgie", while attracting universal attention and elevating him to the pinnacle of fame as a critic, had aroused in many a breast deep indignation and inveterate enmity. Voltaire, when a copy of the "Dramaturgie" was sent him by a mischievous youngster, who proud of his supposed acquaintance with French, added a letter written in that language, coolly replied: "Sir, I am too old to learn German, in order to refute my adversary. You inform me that Mr. Lessing's pages are excellently indited. If he writes German as well as you write French they must indeed be admirable!"<sup>(2)</sup>

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(1) *Leben von Lessing*, von G. Lessing. Berlin 1793. Vol. 1st.

(2) *Leben von Lessing*, von Gutzrauer. Vol. 1st p. 213.

But all who had suffered from Lessing's wit or irony were not so indifferent. Some marked their resentment by attacking him in their turn, and, although their shafts generally fell wide of the mark, yet the consciousness of having excited personal enmity while fulfilling what he deemed a sacred duty, was inexpressibly painful to Lessing's generous nature. Many of his most intimate literary friends were wounded at the tone of biting sarcasm in which he so often thought fit to indulge. "Our theatre", they said, "is yet at too tender an age to admit of the despotic sceptre of criticism." "It is more essential to point out the means by which the ideal is to be attained, than the distance at which we stand from this ideal." "The theatre must be reformed not by rules, but by examples. To reason is easier than to invent." "Why did not the critic offer the *"chef-d'œuvre"* he insisted on from others?" (1).

The last taunt struck home. Lessing's was no impromptu genius. For composition, he required time, reflexion, leisure. Instead of lowering or changing his tone, however, he replied by demanding what the disaffected could themselves produce worth notice. But the clamour grew louder, and Lessing at length found himself compelled to withdraw from the superintendence of the theatre, and to give up his "Dramaturgie." His well known quarrel with Klotz was then at its height. It has been the fashion to throw the whole blame upon the latter, whose name has become almost synonymous with pretension, igno-

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(1) *Leben von Lessing*, von Gutzrauer. Vol. 1st.

rance and vanity. An impartial examination will do much to modify our opinion on this subject. In depth and variety of learning Klotz was far inferior to Lessing. Yet he was generally admitted to be an elegant and profound scholar. He had edited and commented many important classical works. He had produced a collection of Latin odes which a modern critic of no mean eminence has declared the most successful imitation of Horace the German muse had ever achieved. <sup>(1)</sup> Herder speaks of him as the "immortal Klotz". True he bestows the same high-sounding epithet on Gessner, so that it loses much of its value; but he adds in terms which admit of no ambiguity: "He is a keen connoisseur of Grecian literature, an admirable judge of art, deserving thanks, alike for his editions of the classic writers and for his commentaries". <sup>(2)</sup> Lessing himself in his first edition of the "Laocoon" laments in a tone of respectful regret, that the opinion of one whose taste was in general so refined and so correct, should occasionally differ from his own.

The original cause of the quarrel was an article on the very work just mentioned which appeared in the "*Acta Litteraria*", a literary journal of which Klotz was editor. Amid eulogiums both warm and delicate enough to satisfy, one would think, the most exigent of authors, the reviewer ventured to refute some of his opinions and to bring forward certain ap-

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(1) A. Bude. *Leben und Werke der vorzüglichsten lateinischen Dichter des 15. bis zum 18. Jahrhundert.* Wien vol. 2nd.

(2) Herder. *Fragmente zur deutschen Literatur.* p. 176.

preciations of his own, which highly displeased Lessing.<sup>(1)</sup> We will not attempt to enter into the details of the paper war that ensued or to examine the "Antiquarian letters" which were its result. Whatever Klotz's errors in temper or erudition, however unquestionable Lessing's superiority, the tone of contemptuous invective in which he indulges, far exceeds the bounds of literary controversy, and has been condemned even by his warmest admirers.

Although the excitement of this contest engrossed for awhile all Lessing's time and attention, it did not render Hamburg a more agreeable residence. His desire to leave it increased every day. "I will sell all my books", he writes to his brother in 1765, "and with the first ship, set sail for Italy. You ask what I shall do there? As much as in Germany; I cannot live here for less than eight hundred thalers a year. At Rome three hundred will suffice, and I can manage to scrape together enough to exist for one twelvemonth."

But Lessing soon found that the funds to execute this long cherished project were wanting. "I must turn all I have into money", he again writes, "and even then I shall not be able to defray the expences of my journey. My heart bleeds when I think of my parents. God is witness that it is not absence of the desire that prevents my aiding them. I am at this moment poorer than any of the family. The poorest owes nothing, and I, while wanting the ne-

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(1) *Leben von Lessing von Gubrauer.* Vol. 1st.



cessaries of life, am over head and ears in debt. God help me!"

Lessing's circumstances indeed grew more and more desperate. With the "Dramaturgie", his salary had ceased, and he knew not where to turn for aid, when the Prince of Brunswick, a warm admirer of his works, offered him the post of librarian at Wolfenbüttel. Lessing gladly accepted, and for a while seemed as contented as his restless nature would allow. His solitude, of which he occasionally complained, was cheered by the hope of domestic happiness. He had long been attached to a widow lady, a Mad<sup>me</sup> König of Hamburg, whose virtues and talents rendered her worthy his affection, and he believed the moment had arrived to unite their fate. Unforeseen circumstances, however, still deferred the happy event. Meanwhile new storms arose. Amid the dusty manuscripts, to disinter which was now his favourite pursuit, Lessing had discovered a fragment by some unknown Deist, calling in question the truth not only of Christianity, but of all revealed religion. Carried away by his love of discussion and investigation, in whatever form they appeared, he published the unlucky manuscript, thus bringing down a torrent of wrath upon his head. Goëtz, Pastor of St. Catherine's church at Hamburg, a man of great learning, became the organ of all who were either really shocked at the opinions he seemed to espouse, or rejoiced in having an opportunity of wreaking their vengeance on one by whom their self-love had been so often wounded. Lessing defended himself with his wonted skill; but the controversy assumed proportions

so alarming, that the Duke of Brunswick interfered and imposed silence on both parties.

From these unworthy squabbles, our author turned to literary compositions. His "Emilia Galotti" which appeared in 1777, was overpraised in its own day and is, perhaps, underrated in ours. "If," says Frank Horn, "any one had awakened a German reader thirty or forty years ago, just after midnight when sleep is sweetest, and asked him which is the finest German drama, he would have replied without even arousing himself from his slumbers "Emilia Galotti".<sup>(1)</sup> "Emilia Galotti" is the story of "Virginus" modernised, save that Lessing has wisely concentrated the interest on the daughter rather than on the father. The situations are natural and affecting. Emilia herself is admirably drawn — a union of confiding innocence, virgin purity and heroic firmness. Her entreaties that her father will end her existence rather than suffer her to remain exposed to the dangers that surround her, are in perfect harmony with the rest of her character. She is no heroine proud in conscious strength and ready, nay eager to confront every imaginable peril, certain to come forth victorious from the fiery ordeal. She is but a woman pure and stainless, indeed, in word and thought, but still not entirely free from that vanity and love of pleasure, natural to her age. She is conscious that, too deep within her secret heart, smoulder the sparks of passion which temptation might fan into a flame. She has loved her betrothed with a calm and tranquil affection; but she feels that this

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(1) *Poesie und Prosa*. Vol. 3rd. 1824.

is not the only species of love of which [she] is capable, that there are passions more intense, more fervent, which begin dimly to stir within the recesses of her soul. Odoardo bids her remember that her innocence can defy every attempt at force. "But not", replies Emilia, "every temptation. What is called *force* is nothing, *seduction* is the real force. I will answer for nothing. I will promise nothing, I know the house of Grimaldi. It is the house of pleasure. One hour there, one single hour under the eye of my mother, and a tumult arose in my soul, which weeks of the strictest religious practices scarcely sufficed to calm".<sup>(1)</sup>

It is Emilia who urges her father's trembling hand, and when at length he has yielded — when he has plunged the dagger in that lovely bosom, it is she who with her dying breath seeks to calm his despair.

*Odoardo.*

Oh God! what have I done!

*Emilia.*

Broken a rose, ere the storm stripped it of its leaves. Let me kiss, let me kiss this paternal hand."

The character of Odoardo and the terrible deed by which he sacrifices his daughter's life to save her honour, have been criticized as out of keeping with the Italian character of modern days. But however much that once renowned people may have degenerated from the severer virtues which made their ancestors masters of the universe, there have yet always existed some not unworthy of a Virginius.

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(1) Goethe observed that Emilia must be supposed to love the Prince to account reasonably for her fears.

The lover Appiani is somewhat cold and uninteresting; the mother too vulgar, too commonplace for the rank to which she belongs. The Countess Orsini is admirably portrayed. Marinelli is a monster of cunning artifice and baseness of which indeed there were too many instances at the Italian courts of the middle ages, but which could perhaps have scarcely existed at the period which Lessing assigns for his drama. The Prince himself is a character common enough in all countries and in all times. A weak unprincipled libertine, too dastardly to commit a crime with his own hands, but willing enough to profit by it when committed by another.

The style is scarcely sufficiently elevated for the subject, or the terrible denouement which from the very commencement we see dimly shadowed forth.

Notwithstanding the popularity of "Emilia", Lessing felt that his true sphere was not the drama, and he returned to his native element of criticism, devoting all his attention to his "Beiträge zur Geschichte und Philosophie". But to remain long contented with any position, whatever it might be, was not in his nature. He was wearied with Wolfenbüttel, with his duties, with everything about him. "To study", he writes, "for awhile in a great library is well enough, to bury one's self there is madness. I perceive my present labours perfectly stupify me. I can no longer endure it. I must break or bend." At this moment, when his health both of mind and body seemed giving way beneath too incessant application and almost unbroken solitude, he received a proposition to visit

Vienna, for the purpose of assuming the direction of an Academy of arts and sciences, which Maria Theresa proposed establishing. After considerable hesitation he directed his steps thither, merely however on a visit, and without giving up his appointment at Wolfenbüttel. He was admitted to a private audience of the Empress, who received him most graciously; but so numerous were the impediments raised against the project that it was indefinitely postponed, and Lessing was about to return to the spot he had hoped to quit for ever, when the Hereditary Prince of Brunswick then on a visit to the court of Austria proposed his accompanying him to Italy. The offer was too tempting to admit of hesitation, and in a few weeks he found himself on his way to that land he had so fervently desired to behold. But here as usual disappointment awaited him. Attached by his position to the person of the Prince, he was compelled to waste in empty ceremonials the time he would fain have devoted to antiquarian research, or to wanderings amid those haunts so dear to classic memory. "Half the day", he writes to Mad<sup>me</sup> König, "is taken up with eating and drinking." The idea which somehow or other suggested itself to his mind that his betrothed was suffering from severe illness so absorbed his thoughts, as to render him insensible to the beauties around him. Even in Rome, that Rome where he had so often longed to live and die, he continued sad and dispirited. His journal, which does not commence until the latter part of the journey, is far less interesting than might have been expected; it contains notices of the prin-

cial relics of antiquity, of pictures, statues, churches; but the remarks are short and broken.

In 1776 Lessing returned to Germany, and early the following year Mad<sup>me</sup> König became his wife. And now for awhile his unquiet spirit seemed at rest. That which neither study, composition nor philosophy could effect, was realized by domestic happiness, by the tenderness of a loving partner. Mad<sup>me</sup> König was no ordinary person. "Such a woman", writes the historian Timotheus Spittler who passed some years at Wolfenbüttel, "I have never known. Such unstudied goodness of heart, such almost divine quietude of soul which, by some wondrous power or sympathy, she contrives to communicate to every one who has the good fortune to be near her". (1)

The spell which Mad<sup>me</sup> Lessing threw over those around her could not fail to exercise a potent influence on a mind like that of her husband's, so keenly alive to all that was good and noble. His irritability decreased; his whole nature seemed tranquillised and softened, and the very spirit of love and concord reigned over the little household. The good tidings soon reached Mendelsohn, whose warm affection and admiration for Lessing did not blind him to his errors. "You seem to me now", he writes, "in a better and happier vein, and in one which harmonises far more with my own tone of thought than the witty but bitter humour which I observed in you some years ago. I was not strong enough to beat down the violence of this mood; but I heartily desired

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(1) Briefe an Meusel. Coburg 1818.

that time, circumstances and your own reason might effect a change. All I hear and see of you, confirms me in the agreeable belief that it has been effected; my wish is fulfilled". (1)

But Lessing's domestic bliss was to be of brief duration. His wife expired a year after their union in giving birth to a son who followed his mother to the tomb. During the ten days that she lay insensible ere death tore her from him for ever, Lessing watched incessantly beside her pillow, but in vain. His grief did not find vent in tears or exclamations. It was silent and concentrated. "My wife is dead", he wrote to a friend soon after her decease, "that experience likewise I have made. I rejoice that many such do not remain". "If", he says in a letter to Claudius, "I could have purchased with one half of my days the permission to have passed the other half in the society of my wife — how gladly would I have done it? But that cannot be, and I must begin once more to go on my way alone. I have not a single friend to whom I can confide my whole being. I must pay dearly for the one year I passed with a reasonable wife. How do I curse the hour when I sought to be happy like other men! How often do I wish I could return to my former isolated condition and be content to be nothing, do nothing, desire nothing but what the moment commands. But I am too proud to confess I am unhappy; I gnash my teeth and let the bark drift on whithersoever wind and wave think fit to bear it. Enough that I do not turn it over with

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(1) Mendelssohn's Briefe an Lessing.

my own hands". "If you had only known her!" he writes to his brother. "They say it is egotism to praise one's wife. Well! I will say no more of her, You will never I fear see me again as our Moses saw me; so calm, so tranquil within my own four walls". Who does not recognise in these words a sorrow as sincere as it was profound?

So soon as Lessing was capable of literary exertion, he turned to the revision and publication of his "Nathan the Wise", commenced previous to his departure for Italy and completed shortly before the shock which had destroyed his earthly happiness. It was designed as an exposition—a defence of his religious opinions, and was written in a theological rather than in a dramatic point of view. The noble spirit of toleration which breathes throughout, the tone of pure philosophy that pervades every line, would alone render it a work of no common order, even were it devoid of every other merit. But though the versification is generally laboured, nay often harsh, it is vigorous, clear and natural, and there is something of romance and chivalrous dignity in the personages which rivets our interest. Nathan indeed is Lessing, Hebraicised and transplanted to an Eastern soil, while retaining the enlightened taste, the elevated feelings, the pure morality, the perfect tolerance of a Christian, not of the 18<sup>th</sup> century in which so many prejudices yet lingered, but of our own days. To represent such a character as existing among the Jews of the 11<sup>th</sup> century, above all the Eastern Jews, is so complete an anachronism, that it can be excused only



by regarding the *personage* as a mere vehicle to convey those important lessons which the author was so anxious to diffuse. Lessing falls into the very error with which he so severely reproaches Racine and Corneille while far, we need scarcely say, from rivalling their beauties. The aim of the drama indeed is too apparent. It pierces everywhere, and noble as is that aim, its constant introduction decidedly weakens the interest of the piece. We feel the *dramatis personæ* are subservient to a predetermined end, which must be accomplished, however little it may be consistent with the nature, disposition or characteristics of the individuals.

But neither time nor constant occupation could restore that cheerfulness and tranquillity which Lessing had enjoyed during the brief period of his married life. He was oppressed by deep and frequent fits of dejection. He would remain for hours, his head buried in his hands apparently unconscious of all around him. Frequently too, he was so overcome by weariness as to sink into profound sleep even in the midst of society. Gradually his breathing became affected, his eyes lost their wonted fire, his step grew weak and faltering, and it was evident to all who knew him that his health was rapidly failing. Jacobi, who visited him in March 1781, speaks of a secret grief which had much to do in hastening his end. "He was overwhelmed with melancholy. Never shall I forget the morning of our last meeting. At first we disputed. I refuted his arguments so completely, that he could get on no further. His countenance grew terrible—I have never beheld one

like it. Gradually, however, he became calmer, and even confidential. He complained that every one abandoned him. He hinted that his departed wife had on her dying bed upbraided him as having destroyed her peace by infecting her with dangerous opinions. This was fearful and made him shudder to think of marriage, love or children".<sup>(1)</sup>

A melancholy picture indeed! And replete with warning. Jacobi affirmed that in this interview, an account of which he afterwards made public, his friend had become a convert to the system of Spinoza. This Mendelsohn indignantly denied. That Lessing had for some time manifested a predilection for that singular doctrine cannot be doubted. Whether he made Jacobi his confidant may reasonably be questioned. His regard for him was great, but far less warm or tender than that he felt for Mendelsohn. To this excellent man whose gentle, timid, retiring nature formed so strong a contrast to his own, his heart clung with fond remembrance. "The play is over" he writes December 17<sup>th</sup> 1781. "If only I could see you once again!"

They were to meet no more on earth. On the 3<sup>d</sup> of January Lessing was seized with a paralytic stroke. He lingered for many days in a state between life and death. At times a ray of hope appeared, to cheer his anxious friends; but it was only momentary. One evening as his step-daughter Amelia and some other members of his family were assembled in a room adjoining that of the sufferer whom they had quitted

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(1) L. S. Jacobi, *Ausereifener Briefwechsel*. Vol. 1st p. 318.

only a few minutes before, the door suddenly opened and Lessing himself stood before them; over his noble countenance the shadows of death already hung. He approached his step-daughter, took her hand and pressed it fondly in his own. He then turned towards the rest of the party; attempted to salute them, but his strength failed him — he was carried back to his bed whence he rose no more. The following evening he expired. <sup>(1)</sup>

Thus closed the career of this remarkable man, around whom, to use the words of Gervinus <sup>(2)</sup>, gathered all the friends of progress; theologians, philosophers, critics, poets, teachers and statesmen, all drawn by him directly or indirectly into the circle of his own intellectual movement." His fame rests on his merits as a critic, far more than as a poet; for despite occasional one-sidedness of judgement, a critic he was in the fullest sense of the word. He himself, with that consciousness of his own powers which generally distinguished him, declared that his place was among critical, not among creative spirits. "People often do me the honour," he observes at the end of his "Dramaturgie", "to consider me a poet, but only because they mistake me. Every one who handles a pencil or mixes colours is called a painter. Whatever is endurable in my later efforts is due — of that I am conscious — to criticism alone. I do not feel within me that living spring which raises itself by its own strength, and rushes along with such glad

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(1) *Leben von Lessing* von Gurauer. p. 315.

(2) *Geschichte der deutschen Dichtung*. Vol. 3d p. 419.

and free impetus. I must force everything from my brain by pressure and effort. I should be so poor, so cold, so shortsighted, had I not learnt in some degree to borrow modestly from other men's treasures, to warm myself at other men's hearths, to strengthen my eyes by the glasses of others. I am therefore always amazed, when I hear or read anything to the prejudice of critics. They say they crush genius, and I flatter myself that they have given me something like genius. "He who reasons rightly", he adds somewhat illogically, "may be able to invent, and he who can invent will be able to reason. Those only believe that one can be separated from the other who are alike incapable of both."

Such a fallacy from the lips of a Lessing may well surprise us. No one should have better known that invention and judgement, although by no means incompatible, are faculties totally distinct, and that it is somewhat rare, as experience daily proves, to find them, in any very high degree, united in the same individual. But the peculiar constitution of his mind rendered him scarcely a fitting judge on this subject. From the first moment of his literary career he had assumed a commanding position by the possession of qualities peculiarly rare in Germany at that period and therefore doubly esteemed. He had none of the intense sensitiveness of minds of a more delicate and more brilliant order. He had never felt those pangs which torment such natures, when assailed by the cold blast of unsparing criticism. For himself it was his element. It was the excitement of the chase, not the value of the acquisition that attracted him. "Not

the truth" he observes, "in the possession of which a man is or fancies himself secure, but the honest means he has taken to arrive at that truth forms the real merit; for it is not by his possession, but by his search that his powers are invigorated and developed. While the former renders him tranquil, calm and self-sufficient, the latter spurs him on, to further exertions. If God in his right hand held the truth, the whole truth, and all the truth, and in his left the single and ever-moving desire for truth, though the condition were affixed that I must perpetually err in its pursuit, I would seize his left, and reply with humility: "Father, give! Pure truth is for thee alone."

Strange sophism! To prefer the means to the end, when those means are error, and the end the supreme good! Here we find the key to Lessing's perpetual mental disquietude, and to that of so many other modern philosophers who prefer drifting about on the ocean of doubt and speculation, when the port of truth lies open before them.

Lessing's religious opinions have often been and still continue to be a subject of discussion. He was accused, as we have already seen in his own time, and the accusation has been since frequently revived — of infidelity, nay even of atheism. In a sitting of the Consistorium of Brunswick, the Abbot Henk spoke of the "seliger Lessing". "You mean", interrupted another reverend personage present, "the gestorben Lessing." (1)

(1) Selig in German has a double meaning, both "blest," and "departed" — gestorben simply means the latter.

It has often been said, that if he did not do as much mischief to the cause of religion as Voltaire, it was not for want of inclination. These strictures though not altogether devoid of truth, are in many respects both unjust and unfounded. That Lessing's mind was naturally inclined to scepticism, is proved both by his writings and his life. But that scepticism owed its rise to sources very different from that of the French philosopher, to that ardent passionate unquenchable thirst for truth which unhappily he never succeeded in assuaging. We know too well, how often that living spring, open to the humble and trusting spirit, is sealed to those who commence the search with too much confidence in their own powers, with too high an estimate of their own pretensions. Lessing forgot that human reason, despite the wide extent of its range, has yet its bounds; that while we are not only permitted but commanded to call it to our aid in spiritual as well as temporal matters, we must not expect that unaided and alone it can unveil the secrets of eternity. But this much is certain. Lessing was not of that modern school which denies all things apparently for the mere pleasure of denial, which destroys all existing belief without the will or power to substitute anything in its place. "I have nothing to say against the Christian religion", he observes, "I am rather its friend than otherwise, and shall always remain well inclined towards it. It answers the aim of positive religion as well as any other. I believe it, and consider it good as far as one can believe anything, for I cannot oppose any testimony to that which it presents."

Why not then believe? The power of belief was wanting. Lessing trusted too implicitly to the strength of his own intellect; an intellect clear, searching, acute and powerful indeed, beyond that generally granted to man, but insufficient here. While acknowledging the validity of the proofs offered as to the truth of Christianity, in his secret soul lingered a doubt of that truth, a doubt which with all his efforts—and they were sincere and continual—he was never able to dispel. He distinguished the religion of Christ from the Christian religion. The former he describes as that which he himself acknowledged and practised.

He seems indeed to have been what in our own country is called a Unitarian; to have loved and venerated the character of Jesus as a man devoid of sin, perhaps as a willing sacrifice to expiate the errors of a guilty world, while he denied his divine origin. At other times feeling the difficulty of reconciling these tenets with that portion of the New and Old Testament on which alone the Christian faith is founded, he turned from this belief also, and remained in a state of doubt and indecision, unspeakably painful to one of his upright and loyal spirit. He endeavoured to throw off the anxious thoughts of futurity which so frequently oppressed him; to tranquillize himself with the belief that it is not intended for man to inquire into the secrets of that world which Providence has hidden from his view. "Thus much we have discovered", he says, "that the knowledge of the future is of little aid to us on earth. When will reason succeed in teaching us to doubt

the wisdom of our desire to know more of a future existence? That first desire has led to great errors, the second leads every day to others still more dangerous. In their anxiety about a future state, fools lose the enjoyment of the present. Cannot we wait for a future life even as we wait for a future day? If there were an art of learning the future we ought rather to refuse to learn it, and if there were a religion which could give undoubted tidings of another life, it would be wiser for us not to listen it."

Yet that there were moments when he felt the emptiness of his own doctrine, as is evident from the words which, shortly after the death of his wife, he addressed to an intimate friend. "What would I give to be certain that we shall meet again! I hunger after conviction, so much that, like Midas, I swallow everything that seems to me to resemble a means of nourishment. The inspiration of the Gospel is the wide breach, over which I cannot pass, however earnestly and frequently I have desired to make the leap. If any one can help me over it, let him do so. I implore, I entreat it, he will deserve a reward of God." Is this the language of a scoffer?

The restless spirit that pervades Lessing's writings was but a type of his existence; for ever moving, almost always in the same circle, from Berlin to Hamburg, from Hamburg to Berlin; always employed, always active, never contented, save for the short space of his married life. It was not external circumstances which tormented him. These, in comparison with the trials to which so many of his brother poets were subjected, may be called almost fortunate.



He had not to wait heart-sick and despairing on the threshold of fame. The portals were at once thrown open, and if the path was not always free from obstacles, these served only as spurs to his energetic nature. The source of his sufferings was within. "Ah", he exclaims in his preface to his collected works 1764, "there were years when I knew men only from books. — Envidable years! Happy is he who never knows them more closely! How I wish those days could return — the only peaceful ones I ever knew."

Yet Lessing in private and domestic life was generally beloved. To his step-children he was the most affectionate of fathers, mingling in their sports and loading them with caresses. To his servants he was kind and generous, to the poor and needy his hand was ever open. When reminded that many of those who solicited his aid were probably undeserving: "Ah," he would reply, "if we had only what we deserve we should indeed have little!" (1)

Among the peculiar merits of Lessing's style lucidity is one of the most striking. Every thing vague or complicated he detested, declaring that confusion of language was almost always the result of confusion of ideas. He carried this theory so far indeed as to condemn much poetry of the highest order, because it had something of those shadowy tints which, when not too deep, enhance the beauty of a picture, alike from the hand of the painter or of the poet.

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(1) *Leben von Lessing, von Gohrau.*

In a supplement to Lessing's works we find those fragments of two incomplete dramas on "Faust" of which we have already spoken. <sup>(1)</sup> To a mind like Lessing's this subject must have possessed no common attractions, and it is singular that he should never have brought them to a conclusion. In the first of these fragments the scene represents a Gothic church with a high altar and several smaller ones. On the former sits Satan, on the others his attendant Demons. Satan thus addresses them:

Speak! tell us what thou hast done.

*First Devil.*

I saw a cloud which bore destruction in its womb. I soared aloft, hid myself in its darkest folds, and hovered over the hut of a poor and pious man slumbering beside his wife. I tore open the cloud and shook down all its fire upon the cottage which became its prey, &c.

*Satan.*

Ah, thou sayest it was the cottage of a poor and pious man?

*First Devil.*

Yes, of a poor and pious man; now he is utterly ruined and lost —

*Satan.*

Yes, lost for us. Rob the rich man of his gold, till he despair, and shower it upon the hearth of the poor that it may lead his heart astray; thus we have double profit.

The second Demon tells him that he has drowned a fleet full of pirates, which again enrages Satan, who declares that they were already his prey and had they been left on earth would have spread misery and desolation around. The third pleases him better;

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(1) Vol. 1st, part 1st.

he has infused dreams of sin and worldly lusts into a virgin's pure and loving heart. The fourth has as yet done nothing; but he has found a youth living and breathing only for wisdom, renouncing every passion save that for truth, dangerous to the spirits of Hell if he once become a teacher of the people. He owns that he knows of no weak side by which to lay hold of him.

*Satan.*

Has he not thirst for knowledge?

*Fourth Devil.*

More than any mortal.

This the tempter, perhaps too truly, deems sufficient to ensure his perdition. This youth is no other than Faust; but instead of allowing him to be seduced and ruined, the angel of Providence plunges him into a deep slumber, and creates in his stead a phantom. It is only when the Demons retire, enraged at being baulked of their prey, that he awakes, and thanks God for the dream he has sent him.

The second drama is far more impressive. It commences with a prologue. The scene is an old cathedral. The sexton and his son are about to ring the midnight chimes. The Demons invisible are assembled upon the altar debating their future plans; various devils appear to give an account of what they have done on earth; one has burnt a town, another sunk a fleet &c.; the third boasts a far greater deed, he has persuaded a holy man to get drunk, and in this condition to commit murder. This brings the conversation to Faust who is not to be so easily beduced. The above-mentioned devil, however, undertakes to

draw him to perdition in less than four and twenty hours. Accordingly he enters his study where, seated by the light of the midnight lamp, he is seeking to summon up Aristotle. At his spell, the Demon assumes the semblance of the philosopher, and after a short conversation, in which he replies satisfactorily to the most difficult questions, disappears. His work is done. Faust's worst passions are stimulated. He hitherto has longed only for forbidden knowledge; now he feels within his soul unhallowed desires, to which he has till now been a stranger; once more he has recourse to his spells. Seven Devils appear; he asks which is the swiftest? The first declares he can fly more rapidly than Faust can pass his finger through the fire without burning it. The second, that he is swifter than the arrows of the plague. The third, than the wings of the wind. The fourth, than the rays of light. But all these are too slow for the impatience of Faust, and he turns to the fifth.

*Faust.*

How swift art thou?

*Fifth Spirit.*

As the thoughts of man.

*Faust.*

That is something; but the thoughts of man are not always rapid. How slow are they when truth or virtue summons them! (*To the sixth Spirit.*) How swift art thou?

*Sixth Spirit.*

As the vengeance of the avenger!

*Faust.*

Swift sayest thou? Swift! and I live still and sin!

*Sixth Spirit.*

That he suffers thee to sin is vengeance.

*Faust.*

And that a Devil should teach me this!

But no! his vengeance is not swift —

(*To the seventh Spirit.*) How rapid art thou?

*Seventh Spirit.*

As rapid as the passage from good to ill.

*Faust.*

Ah! thou art my Devil! The passage from good to ill! I know how rapid that can be! <sup>(1)</sup>

There are few passages in Goethe's "Faust" finer than this. But happily for frail humanity, Lessing was mistaken. Providence in its infinite goodness, has decreed that the corruption of the human mind should be a gradual, not an instantaneous process. Vice, as the poet truly tells us, is always hateful when first beheld, unless indeed we have been brought up in daily, hourly contact with her, and have never known the charms of virtue. In ordinary cases, we "first endure, then pity, then embrace." The legend of Tannhäuser and the Venusberg is but a type of the great and consoling truth, that sin obtains entire dominion over that heart only in which vicious desires and unholy dreams have long slumbered unrepressed.

Lessing's works have gone through numerous editions. The last which consists of twelve volumes is as late as 1853. His dramas are little read and

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(1) Lessing's Nachlaß.

less acted; but his name as a critic is still held in high esteem and honour by his countrymen.

In 1853 a colossal statue in bronze was erected to his memory in Brunswick. The left hand holds an open volume, the right is pressed to his heart. The attitude is majestic and the likeness admirable. (1)

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(1) An excellent translation of "Nathan der Weise" will be found in Mr. Taylor's almost forgotten "History of German poetry".

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## CHAPTER III.

### WIELAND.

BIRTH AND EARLY EDUCATION. — EARLY POETIC EFFORTS. — FIRST LOVE. — SOPHIA VON GUTERMAN. — RESIDENCE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF TÜBINGEN. — VISIT TO BODMAR. — SOPHIA'S PAINFUL POSITION. — MISUNDERSTANDING. — SOPHIA WEDS ANOTHER. — WIELAND'S EMOTIONS. — SECOND ATTACHMENT. — ACCEPTS AN APPOINTMENT IN HIS NATIVE TOWN. — MEETING WITH SOPHIA. — "AGATHON." — MARRIAGE. — HE IS APPOINTED DIRECTOR OF THE UNIVERSITY OF ERFURT. — IS VIOLENTLY ASSAILED BY THE PROFESSORS AND THE CLERGY. — IS APPOINTED TUTOR TO THE DUKE OF WEIMAR. — FRIENDSHIP WITH GOETHE. — KINDNESS TO SCHILLER. — "OBERON". — PURCHASE OF ASMANSTADT. — VISIT OF SOPHIA DE LA ROCHE. — DEATH OF MAD. WIELAND. WIELAND'S RETURN TO WEIMAR. — INTERVIEW WITH NAPOLEON. — WIELAND'S LITERARY ACTIVITY. — DEATH. — BRIEF REVIEW OF HIS WORKS AND GENIUS.

WHILE Klopstock at once called forth and represented the religious and patriotic fervour of his native land — while Lessing regenerated her drama and directed her taste — a genius, of an order very different indeed, far less elevated, but in his own sphere equally remarkable, arose on the German horizon. Never has the instability of human fame been

more strikingly exemplified, than in Wieland. Exalted during a great portion of his long career to the very summit of literary celebrity, compared to Ovid, Tasso, Ariosto, admired, praised, translated throughout civilized Europe, he lived long enough to behold a new school, diametrically opposed to his own, attack his works with unsparing virulence, and tear from his brow the laurels with which an earlier generation had crowned them. To the absurd denial of his poetic powers, the "Oberon", which appeared after this momentous epoch was a triumphant reply; but the accusation became more difficult to refute, when his enemies pointed scornfully to the moral laxity, to the epicurean philosophy which disfigure so many of his productions, and justify to a great degree the comparative neglect into which they have fallen. It is to the credit of human nature and above all of our own age, that although graceful sensuality may win temporary favour, true principles of virtue and morality can alone insure lasting success. But from the charges to which his other works are justly liable, "Oberon" at least is free, and if Wieland had never written another line, this alone would stamp him as one of the most graceful of modern poets. While the depth and extent of his erudition, the charm and melody of his style, entitle him to a high place in the literary annals of his country, his private virtues, his noble disinterestedness, the purity of his life, so strangely contrasted with the warmth of his descriptions, can scarcely fail to interest the reader.

Christopher Martin Wieland was born the 15<sup>th</sup> of September 1733 at the little village of Oberholzheim



near Biberach, in Suabia, where his father, a man of virtue and talent, was pastor. The minister himself undertook the education of his son, whose precocious talents flattered his parental pride, and gave promise of future distinction. At seven years old, he was already no contemptible Latin scholar; at eleven he composed Latin verses with tolerable facility and correctness, and a year or two later, had actually commenced an epic poem "The fall of Jerusalem", thus announcing his future vocation. In a letter to Gellert, with whom he was afterwards in correspondence, he describes his early life. "At eleven years old", he says, "I was already enthusiastically fond of poetry, of nature, and antiquity. I scribbled thousands of elegiac verses, and spent whole nights in my father's garden, striving to reproduce in detestable odes the sensations with which the beauties of nature filled my soul." Such constant study and frequent vigils both so little suited to his tender age, gradually affected the boy's health, and in his fourteenth year his father determined on sending him to the college of Klosterbergen, near Magdeburg. This establishment, celebrated for the talent and skill of its professors, was the centre of the mystical pietism at that time prevalent among the Lutherans of Germany, and to which Wieland's father was himself somewhat addicted. The director, Steinmütz, a man of highly cultivated mind, and extensive acquirements, was struck with the evident talent of his young pupil, and devoted himself particularly to his instruction. Wieland studied with great assiduity, and made rapid progress, particularly in Greek.

Xenophon and Plutarch were his favourite authors, and while his young companions were indulging in the noisy sports of their age, he would steal quietly away, and seating himself at the further end of the play-ground, pore over his beloved books. Of French and English, he soon became sufficiently master to read the works of the principal writers in the original.

The austere discipline of the college, the religious fervour of its director, the grand and savage nature of the landscape around, all combined to heighten those sentiments of deep and ardent piety which early education had instilled; and Wieland began to devote himself with earnestness to the study of theology, and to preparation for the duties of a Protestant pastor, which, no less by his own desire than that of his father, he had chosen as his future career. Unfortunately at this very moment, Jean Jacques Rousseau, Shaftesbury, Voltaire and similar authors fell into his hands. Shaken by the specious arguments they presented, and which his religious instruction was not sufficiently profound to enable him to refute, he became a prey to doubts of the most painful nature.

In 1750 he left the college at the age of seventeen, and returned to Biberach; but his health being affected by mental suffering and over-study became so delicate, that his father consented reluctantly to his abandoning the clerical career. He sent him to a relation at Erfurt, a physician of skill and reputation, whose care soon succeeded in restoring him, and who to use his own words, "taught him much that was both

good and evil in philosophy." (1) But at Erfurt he was not happy. "My residence", he observes, "was more useful than agreeable. I had no friend; for I found no one who united taste for literature with love of virtue. Banner read Don Quixote with me, and taught me thence some knowledge of men and of the world. He laughed at the idea that Cervantes' only aim was to render Spanish chivalry ridiculous. Don Quixote and Sancho," he said, "were the representatives of the human race—they were all enthusiasts or blockheads. I commented on this many-sided text."

In 1751 Wieland returned to the parental roof, where he remained for some time leading a desultory though not an idle life. Here his romantic tendencies were brought into full play; for here he first loved. The object of this passion, Sophia von Gutermann, was no ordinary maiden. Her father was superintendent of the library at Augsburg, and from a child, the little Sophia had been the constant companion of his studious hours. When scarcely four years old, she might be seen seated at his feet while he pursued his researches, and her thirst for knowledge was sedulously cultivated by the fond parent, proud of the endowments of his only child. Distinguished no less by the charms of her person than by her mental superiority, Sophia at seventeen was all poet or painter could dream. Wieland was not her first love. Ere she saw him, she had been affianced to Bianconi, a young Italian, a Roman catholic, physician to

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(1) Briefe an Sedmar. 1753.

the Prince-Bishop of Augsburg. The wedding-day was fixed, when a difference as to the religion in which the children born of this union were to be educated broke it off for ever. — Bianconi urged a secret union; but to this, the dutiful though despairing girl would not consent, and they parted—to meet no more. Bianconi throwing up his appointment returned to Italy, while Sophia resigned herself to silent grief and to what she then believed eternal loneliness and regret. Time passed on. Sophia's mother died, and her father, after a twelvemonth passed in unbroken solitude, suddenly resolved on marrying again. As his daughter's presence might have proved an obstacle to this project, he sent her to her grandfather's, where a cheerful circle and watchful tenderness restored her fading health. But the death of the good old grandsire compelled her either to return to Augsburg where her father was busied in preparations for his approaching marriage, or to remain at Biberach, in the family of a clergyman who had offered her an asylum. She chose the latter alternative. It was at that very moment that young Wieland, scarcely eighteen—but in mind, manners, and talents, already the accomplished gentleman and finished scholar, arrived, to pursue his studies under the direction of this very pastor before proceeding to the university. The young people were beneath the same roof; they met daily—hourly, at table, in their walks—in society. Sophia discovered that all human excellence had not disappeared with Bianconi, and Wieland loved as one loves at eighteen—for the first time. “Scarcely

did a greater change take place in Junius Brutus than in me", observes Wieland; "from a wild thoughtless youth I became once more calm and tender, full of enthusiasm for religion and virtue." This enthusiasm, or rather the passion which inspired it, awoke those poetic talents which had hitherto been dormant. It was on a Sunday, that after a long, and, in Wieland's opinion, somewhat wearisome sermon on the text, "God is love", while accompanying Sophia on a country ramble, he observed such a subject was susceptible of loftier and warmer eloquence. "You may imagine", says Wieland, in describing this scene, "whether I could speak coldly while gazing in her eyes, or whether she heard me unmoved while looking kindly on me. In fact neither of us doubted the excellence of my system, and Sophia, thinking probably that my mode of expression was too lyrical, requested me to set down my ideas in writing. As soon as I left her, I hastened to my desk and endeavoured to put my theory into verse." This poem entitled, "The nature of things", though full of imperfections, is not devoid of merit, and excited considerable attention; while Sophia listened with delight to those verses which, to her ear at least, seemed the sweetest she had ever heard.

This pure affection shed an unutterable charm over the summer and autumn of that year. Wieland however was too young to marry. Besides he was utterly unprovided for; several years must necessarily elapse before a union could be thought of. The time seemed long to these fond hearts; but secure in mutual love, they did not hesitate to plight their mutual

troth. "How", writes Wieland to his mother, who appears to have entertained some doubts as to the stability of this youthful passion—at least on the part of her son, "how can you suppose I can ever forget my Sophia? I would rather die at her feet, than possess all the crowns of earth."

In 1752 Wieland proceeded to the university of Tübingen where he devoted himself sedulously to study. The university, however, had been selected, not for its excellence, but its cheapness; for, although one of the most ancient, and at one time, the most famous in Germany, <sup>(1)</sup> it had long since fallen from its high estate and was resorted to by those only who could afford no other. The principal aim of his residence at Tübingen was the study of jurisprudence; but it accorded too little with his taste to allow of his pursuing it further than was necessary for the ordinary examination. On the future he scarcely cast a thought. Young, ardent and enthusiastic, life and all its treasures seemed to him at his disposal, and he troubled himself but little as to the ways or means by which he was to provide for his existence. Literary, scientific and philosophical pursuits alone attracted him, and to these he resolved, if possible, to devote himself. Socrates was his beau-ideal, and he set before him the character of that philosopher as the aim and end of all his efforts. He considered him superior even to Plato; the one, he observed, said great things; the other did them.

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(1) It was founded in 1477 by Eberhard von dem Bart.

With such tastes we cannot wonder that the rough student-life then common in all German universities should have disgusted him; that he should have lived much in retirement, and shunned the society of his boisterous companions. He was in consequence little popular, though his unsullied purity of life and manners commanded general respect and esteem.

One of Wieland's most earnest desires was to obtain an introduction to the venerable Bodmar, the head of the modern German school, to whom, as we have shown elsewhere, it was in a great degree indebted for its existence. From his lovely retreat on the banks of the Lake of Zurich, the Swiss patriarch still continued to take a lively interest in the literary progress of that country of which he was the adopted son. Wieland accordingly sent him anonymously the first and second parts of a poem, never published, in honour of the German nation, requesting his opinion. Encouraged by a kind and flattering letter, he disclosed his name. Thus commenced that friendship which ended only with the life of the elder. He invited the young author to become his guest, and remain beneath his roof till he should find a favourable opening for the exercise of his talents. The invitation was gratefully accepted. Wieland hastened to that retreat which had already afforded a home to Klopstock, where he found united the charms of a literary circle and the beauties of one of the loveliest spots in the world. Every day the friendship between Bodmar and his guest grew warmer. Wieland's gay and graceful manners, his unvarying good temper, his compliance with all his whims and fancies

charmed the excellent but excentric old man, who not only aided him in his literary labours by his fine critical taste and the treasures of his accumulated knowledge, but introduced him to the poets and learned men who assembled, from every part of Germany around him, as their guide and leader. He often called his guest "the second Klopstock"; uniting the wisdom of age with the fervour of youth.<sup>(1)</sup> Under these circumstances it is not surprising that Wieland should gradually have imbibed the tone and opinions both literary, philosophical and religious of a man who exercised so great an influence over all around him, and to whom he himself looked up with mingled gratitude and affection. All his productions at this period bear the traces of these sentiments, and are tinged with a tone of mystic enthusiasm peculiar to the school by which he was surrounded. Of this class are the "Letters from the Dead to the Living"—"Platonic Contemplations on the Human Race"—"The Trial of Abraham", &c. &c.; none of which display much poetical talent. He likewise published a whole volume of admiring criticism on "Noah", a work of Bodmar's youth, below mediocrity, long since forgotten. Yet let it not be imagined that Wieland had become a parasite or a sycophant. That his affections misled his judgement is tolerably evident; but his sincerity was unimpeachable, whatever we may think of his taste. It is amusing enough to compare these works of his youth, breathing

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(1) Bodmar's Briefe. Zürich 1779.



religious aspirations amounting almost to fanaticism, with those of his later life.

Meanwhile, what had become of his passionate love and of its object? Soon after Wieland had left her, Sophia had returned to the parental roof. But the cold reception she experienced induced her to retrace her steps to Biberach, where she was welcomed with open arms by her future parents. They persuaded her to fix her abode in that dwelling which would soon become her own; and Wieland's letters overflowing with passionate tenderness cheered every lonely hour. "I love you", he writes, "with inexpressible affection; I would rather be at your side, in the most painful position in the world, than be king without you. I would rather die for you, than receive the caresses of a thousand other beauties".<sup>(1)</sup>

These very letters, which with dutiful affection Sophia invariably showed her future mother-in-law, awoke in the maternal heart a jealousy, natural indeed, but fatal to the maiden's happiness. Every day the sentiment gained ground, until it bordered on hatred. Other annoyances combined to render the young girl's position insupportable. A favourite cousin, a companion of her youth, who had seen much of Wieland at Zurich, came for awhile to Biberach, and Sophia, delighted to hear tidings of her lover, encouraged his frequent visits. This supplied a new source of complaint. Unable longer to endure the unjust reproaches of which she was the daily victim, Sophia with a heavy heart returned to Augsburg.

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<sup>(1)</sup> Gruber's *Leben von Wieland* p. 148.

Whether Wieland ever knew all his betrothed had to endure, is uncertain; probably not. But about this time, his letters became less frequent, perhaps less tender. Sophia keenly felt the change; both her heart and her pride were wounded, and in a moment of passionate indignation she herself released her affianced from his engagement, declaring that in heart, if not in deed, she knew he was already faithless. In this she was mistaken. Wieland's affections may indeed have somewhat cooled by time and absence; but he never entertained the slightest idea of breaking his plighted vow.<sup>(1)</sup> Yet the venomous shafts of calumny had not fallen in vain. In the conduct of his Sophia he saw, or believed he saw, the result only of a fickleness which sought to shelter itself under the pretext of wounded jealousy. However deeply pained, he bowed to the decree with a resignation the fair one had scarcely anticipated, and not quite compatible, it must be owned, with the vows of deep enduring love he had so often sworn. Still he did not realise the idea that she was lost to him for ever; and when, at the end of the year 1754, he learnt that she was about to become the bride of another, he was for a moment almost overwhelmed by the intelligence. He did not seek indeed to change her resolve; perhaps he felt that would be useless. "Let me remind you", he writes with a touching mixture of grief and resignation, "that we have promised a thousand times be-

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(1) Gruber, *Leben von Wieland*. p. 168.

fore God to love each other as long as we loved virtue, and we then fancied that would be for ever."

"Shall all this be in vain? No. You must cease to be the guileless, noble-minded Sophia, and I become the very opposite of what you once believed me. I trust we shall meet no more on earth; but let us remain united through our sincere wishes for each other's happiness through our common love for virtue. Thus we may meet again in those blissful realms in which your soul will know itself and me, and—if angels can weep—will shed a tear of regret for the anguish it has caused me".<sup>(1)</sup>

The man on whom Sophia, in obedience to her father's will, had bestowed her hand, was Mr. de la Roche, an adopted son of Count Stadion, Minister to the Archbishop-Elector of Mainz, who after giving him a brilliant education had appointed him his private secretary. La Roche united to a perfect knowledge of the world great talents for business and extensive literary acquirements. According to Wieland himself, he was an honourable and upright man. But despite his many good qualities, he was ill-calculated to win the heart, or fulfil the expectations of an enthusiastic imaginative girl. In the joys, the duties of maternity, Sophia found some compensation for the absence of sympathy in the companion of her existence, and their union, if not perfectly well assorted, was not unhappy.<sup>(2)</sup>

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(1) Wieland's *ausgewählte Briefe*. Vol. 3d. p. 91.

(2) *Grauenbilder aus der Goethe-Schiller Epoche* von H. Schloenbach. 1856. p.p. 154 to 174.

In 1753 Wieland, fearful of becoming a burden to his generous host, accepted a situation as tutor. "I can never", he writes to his benefactor in one of the most charming of letters, "forget the happy hours I enjoyed beneath your roof. I can truly say that my hopes, bright as they were, fell far short of reality. You have showered on me all the tenderness of your excellent heart, you have been a father towards me. With what gentleness, with what magnanimity have you supported my failings! I implore your forgiveness, and venture to hope for it; because I know that the smallest mark of goodness makes a deeper impression on your generous nature than a thousand faults."

Wieland's change of position, by removing him from the immediate influence of Bodmar, and placing him in a completely different circle, tended no doubt to produce the modification of tone and feeling which so soon became apparent in all his writings, and which, with some slight modifications, continued to pervade them during the rest of his life. These religious sentiments were both deep and fervent; that they were not more lasting was owing to the natural tendency of a mind, from which even the strongest impressions were quickly obliterated. Still that at this period they retained no little power over him is evident from the following passage in a letter to Bodmar, 1752. "I have always", he says, "detested all mockers and malicious *esprits forts*. I was in mind a free-thinker and in heart a virtuous man; but I soon found that without God and religion there is no virtue". "I am sorry", he adds in a much later epistle

in 1758, "not to be able to love Voltaire as much as I admire him. He speaks too often like a man of wit where he ought to speak like a reasoner, and like an impudent sophist where he affects the enlightened philosopher." (1)

Wieland accompanied his pupils to Berne, where for the first time he visited the theatre, and was instantly seized with the desire of distinguishing himself as a dramatist. All his attempts, however, were utter failures, and he soon gave them up in despair. Nor was he more fortunate in an epic poem in hexameters, entitled "Cyrus". After completing five cantos, he threw it aside, and it was never resumed. Meanwhile his intercourse with the more brilliant society at Berne, his studies long abandoned, but now resumed, of French, English and classical authors, tended to restore his genius to its natural bent. "My friend," he writes in 1758, to Zimmermann, "you think me more of a Platonist than I really am. I begin to familiarize myself with the inhabitants of this lower world. I have ceased to confound wisdom with harshness. I have no longer an exclusive admiration for the stoics. I love every kind of perfection in whatever form I find it. Affectation, prudery, coquetry indeed, I detest; nor do I like young maidens. The few ladies with whom I have any intercourse here, are all above forty years of age. None have ever been beautiful; all are of stainless reputation. But I believe I have become insensible to any warmer passion. Sophia is lost to me. She was my beloved, my bride;

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(1) Wieland's *ausgewählte Briefe*, Vol. 2d.

she is another's. Never can I find a woman agreeable to me who, in taste, feelings and person, does not resemble my angel."

That Wieland was fully convinced of the truth of this declaration cannot admit of a doubt. Yet in 1759 we find him seriously contemplating a union with Julia Bondeli who, though unknown to fame was, we are assured, one of the most highly endowed women of her day.<sup>(1)</sup> A greater contrast to Sophia could scarcely be conceived. Julia was plain even to ugliness; somewhat pedantic withal, fond of talking, with a loud voice and dictatorial manner, not unlike the picture drawn of the gifted and unfortunate Margaret Fuller. Like her too, she contrived to make all these imperfections forgotten by her intellectual charms, and exercised on every one who came within her sphere an influence absolutely magical. "There is nothing in the world I would not do, nothing that ought to be done I mean," Wieland writes to Zimmermann July 25<sup>th</sup> 1759, "to win the hand of Julia; but I fear this is impossible." So it proved. Julia was resolved to live and die in single-blessedness, and strange to say fulfilled her resolution, while Wieland tired of Berne, accepted the appointment of Clerk to the Corporation offered him by his native town, and returned thither in 1760. How little however the position suited his taste is evident from a letter, in which he bitterly laments the obscurity to which he seemed condemned, the want of congenial society, and above all, the wearisome and uninteresting na-

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(1) Gruber's Leben von Wieland.

ture of his new duties. Accustomed to a literary and poetical circle, he found himself, to use his own expression, "as much alone as Milton's Adam among the beasts of Paradise." But this very loneliness, by compelling him to seek amusement in his own resources, was no doubt favourable to his genius. It was to the study of Shakespeare that he devoted most of his leisure hours at first only to while away the time. But soon rivetted by the spell of that mighty genius, he resolved on attempting a translation, and completed a version of twenty-two of the principal dramas. Although this translation has since been superseded by one far superior in force, elegance and fidelity, still to Wieland must be conceded the merit of having first made his countrymen acquainted with the beauties of that great author whom they were so soon to adopt as their own. It is well known that Goethe preferred Wieland's translation to any other, and despite Gervinus' assurance that in his latter days he changed this favourable opinion, <sup>(1)</sup> his conversations with Falk, fully justify our belief that it continued unvaried to the last. "Whenever" he said to the latter, "I really wish to enjoy Shakespeare, I read him in Wieland's translation". <sup>(2)</sup> For this version Wieland received about two dollars or eight shillings the sheet, a sum not to be disdained by one in his narrow circumstances, though to his honour be it said, he never prostituted literature to mercenary views. As time passed on, he

(1) Gervinus, *Geschichte der deutschen Dichtung*, Vol. 4th.

(2) Goethe, aus näherem persönlichen Umgang dargestellt von Johannes Galf, 1836, p. 158.

began to accustom himself to his mode of existence. "Really", he says, in a letter to Kästner 1776, "my singular fate often makes me smile. — You know I like the world, that a select circle is my great delight; and here I am sequestered, as it were, from the rest of the universe. The people with whom I am obliged to live have scarcely human countenances. What delight if we could only be together! But that is a chimera, and I must not think of it."

Wieland soon found society more congenial to his tastes. Not far from Biberach was the hereditary mansion of the Count of Stadion, whom we have already mentioned; and about the end of the year 1763 the count retiring from the cares of office, came to finish his days in the home of his ancestors. He was accompanied by Mr. and Mad<sup>me</sup> de la Roche. Twelve years had elapsed since Wieland and his betrothed had parted with mutual vows of undying constancy. Who shall venture to read his feelings on beholding once more the being he had so passionately loved now the wife of another, the mother of five children, but as beautiful and more charming than ever, or fathom Sophia's emotions on clasping the hand of him who, if we are to judge from some of her letters, still, in the secret depths of her soul, reigned supreme. But the sense of duty on both sides, enabled them to conceal if not to conquer their sensations, and a friendship of the purest nature, soon replaced the romantic passion of their early youth. The count's library, which had been placed at his disposal, supplied Wieland with all the best works of ancient and modern literature. "You will learn with pleasure," he writes to Zimmer-



man, "that I have found a spot where every now and then I pass some days so delightfully as to make me forget my situation. It is the castle of B— about a league from Erfurt, on the summit of a hill commanding the prospect of a delicious valley. English parks and gardens render this abode charming."

Here he laid the plan of "Don Silvio de Rosalva", "Nadine", and other poems, of but little merit, which appeared in 1764, and which, although they obtained some success at the time, soon sank into oblivion. Of "Diana and Endymion", and several others, a harsher judgment must be pronounced. The tone of scoffing incredulity which reigns throughout, is equally unworthy the heart and the genius of the writer. The society in which he now found himself contributed, in no small degree, to this lamentable change. Count Stadion, who by his remarkable talents, his agreeable manners, his experience of the world, had obtained great influence over the young poet, was a free-thinker, a sceptic, and somewhat of a libertine; and Wieland whose character, chameleon-like, generally reflected the hues of those around him, gradually assumed the same tone. Still his opinions only were tainted; his moral character remained uncontaminated, and he presented the singular spectacle of a man who, while using all his powers of eloquence to defend the wrong cause, strenuously pursues the right. His own life is the severest censure of his works. That he was himself sensible of the dangerous tendency of his writings, and anxious to convince his friends that they were not the course by which he steered his own conduct, is evident from

a passage in a letter to Gesner. "You must not suppose because a man has changed his opinions, his feelings must also change. I do not favour vice because I allow myself gay descriptions and voluptuous portraits; to me they are mere artistic essays, not models I present for imitation."

The weakness of this apology needs no comment; a better excuse may be found in the belief, that young, gay and thoughtless, Wieland really adopted for a while the Epicurean system he supported, and either did not reflect on the consequences of his doctrines, or attributed less importance to them than they deserved. Had these productions been the only result of this new phase of his existence, his name would long since have been forgotten; but in 1766 he completed a prose romance which, whatever its faults, must always be regarded as a composition of no ordinary genius—the "Agathon".

Brought up at Delphi, under the very shadow of the temple, Agathon breathes only the love of virtue. Once in the world at Athens, where he is soon elevated to the pinnacle of fame and fortune, where all sorts of triumphs, dangers and adventures await him, he falls into error and profligacy. He is persuaded by Hippias, the celebrated sophist, that all men are dupes or hypocrites, becomes enamoured of a lovely courtesan Danae, and then, on discovering her mode of life—of which, strange to say, he has hitherto been ignorant—flies her, disgusted with the very name of love. At the court of Syracuse where we next find him, he wins the favour of the tyrant; not to serve his own purposes, but to restore

freedom and happiness to the land. He is betrayed by those he most trusted, thrown into prison, condemned to die and saved only by a miracle. He despairs of human virtue, and regains his love of mankind only, when time, reflection and philosophy have taught him to subdue his enthusiasm and moderate his expectations.

"Agathon" was received with a burst of applause. The richness and truth of colouring, the play of fancy, the lively wit rendered it a universal favourite. Lessing himself united in the chorus of approbation. "Agathon," he observes in his "Dramaturgie", "is without contradiction one of the most remarkable works of our era. In France or England it would have made the greatest sensation, and the name of the writer would be on every tongue. For a thinking man, it is the first and only romance in the classic style." "Wieland," says Dr. Menzel, "found in Greece the ideal of his graces. It was there he drank the pure draught of nature and of life. What Winkelman effected for the plastic, Wieland effected for the poetic art; he taught his country-men to recognise the glory of true beauty." (1)

True, "Agathon" possesses merits of no ordinary nature. To a thorough knowledge of the human heart it unites a wealth of erudition, an intimacy with the habits and every-day life of the ancients not often surpassed. Still we cannot quite agree with an eminent French critic that "Walter Scott had not a more profound acquaintance with the manners of the Middle

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(1) Menzel's *Geschichte der deutschen Dichtung*. Vol. 2d.

Ages than Wieland with those of Greece." (1) Now and then, a touch of modernism peeps out which sadly breaks the charm, and the frequent allusion to French and English artists and authors, to Mrs. Shirley and Harriet Byron, are strangely out of place amid the temples of Delphi and the rosy bowers of Syracuse. If however the morality of "Agathon" were more edifying, its faults of taste might easily be excused. Its professed aim, indeed, is to prove that the noblest emotions, the loftiest aspirations are in themselves insufficient to support our virtue amid temptation, unless sustained by practical common sense and moderated by reflection and reason. But in his desire to enforce his argument, Wieland falls into a cold material philosophy fatal to every pure and lofty impulse; he would too often lead us to suppose that friendship and honour are but empty names; that those who enjoy the highest reputation differ only from the rest, in possessing the art of concealing their vices; that we should always look with suspicion on any one who seems better than his neighbours, that self-interest is, and ought to be, the only basis of human actions, and that it will always prove sufficient, since happiness in its real sense cannot exist without virtue; and this the wise man will at once appreciate. Wieland forgot that there are moments in which interest and duty come in contact with each other; when frail humanity, if unsustained by other and higher motives, would infallibly yield to the force of the present peril; above all, that virtue,

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(1) Etudes sur l'Allemagne par Mr. Philarète Chasles

based on such a system, would become a mere mercenary calculation, in which the best reckoner would be sure to gain the prize. He forgot too that so far as worldly matters are concerned, virtue is frequently anything but its own reward. The qualities essential to success, energy, industry, invincible resolution are compatible with many vices; while a loftier standard of morality is often an insurmountable obstacle to fame or fortune. The man of keen susceptibilities, of stainless honour, shrinks from means which his less scrupulous rival adopts without hesitation, and the former naturally fails, where the latter accomplishes his end.

The licence of Wieland's descriptions is likewise open to censure, despite his excuse, that if he were to represent the manners and customs of ancient Greece at all, he must represent them as they really existed. He often indulges in a warmth of colouring which even the nature of his subject cannot justify, and lingers with delight, where a cursory glance would more than suffice.

But Wieland's new character did not sit easily upon him. He sought in vain to make others forget, or what was more difficult, himself forget that he had once been the zealous apostle of what he now designated as enthusiasm and sentimentality. Like most men who, having changed their opinions, are not quite convinced in their secret hearts of the new doctrines they have espoused, he was far more energetic in their defence than if he had always entertained and thoroughly believed them. Such at least was the opinion of Goethe: "He lived", observed

that acute genius to Falk, "in constant fear of a relapse, and had prescribed perpetual criticism as a preservative. This, his incessant return to the same subject of mockery sufficiently proves. The higher aspirations of his soul were not so easily dismissed, and it often happens when he commenced by ridiculing Platonism, he finished by representing it in a most charming light and with all the warmth of a poetic fancy".

Hitherto Wieland had occupied himself chiefly with prose. Yet his genius was essentially poetic. His wonderful facility of versification, the exquisite correctness of his ear, his love of music, that sister of poetry, renders it difficult to conceive why till now he had so rarely ventured within its domain. His first serious attempt was "Idris and Zenide", in which he endeavoured to portray the struggle between Platonic and sensual love. Zenida, queen of the race of Genii has inspired a young Grecian, Idris, with the most ardent passion. She has, however, sworn to give her hand and heart to him only, who shall resist the charms of her nymphs to which he is previously exposed. The verse is exceedingly melodious, as in all Wieland's compositions but; we do not think any portion worth translation.

The "New Amadis" is in a different style. It is sparkling with wit and humour; but eighteen cantos devoted to a subject in itself little interesting can scarcely fail to weary the reader. Yet it was warmly admired and translated into French and English.

Far superior to the "New Amadis" is "Musarion". The tone is light and graceful, the verses exquisitely sweet, which may perhaps account for the partiality

expressed for it by Goethe even in later life. "Wieland's style", he said in one of his conversations with Falk, "is like a cheerful plain without the slightest impediment, through which the stream of a playful fancy winds in every direction. Not the remotest trace of that laboured technicality which renders the best ideas and feelings disagreeable. Verse he handled in a masterly style. I really believe that had one thrown a box full of words on his desk, he would have contrived to turn them into a charming poem. How many of his most brilliant productions fell in the period of my academical career! "Musarion", in particular, made the greatest impression on my mind, and I still remember the place where I obtained a sight of the first volume. It was here I fancied I beheld the ancient world unveiled to my view. All that is plastic in Wieland's genius displays itself here in the most perfect manner, and when that unhappy man, Phantias, reconciles himself once more to his love and to the world, we would willingly live through the period of philanthropy with him." (1)

We must agree with Gervinus (2) that "Musarion" scarcely deserves the admiration Goethe expresses for it. The subject possesses no very absorbing interest, and the moral is any thing but commendable. The young Athenian Phantias, having dissipated his patrimony, has retired to a little farm on the sea-shore, resolved to fly for ever a world of which he fancies he has exhausted the enjoyments, and where, at all

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(1) Falk's persönliche Erinnerungen von Goethe. p. 157.

(2) Geschichte der deutschen Dichtung. Vol. 4th. p. 271.

events, he can no longer shine. He receives no one save his two most intimate friends, Theosphrom and Cleanthes; the former is a disciple of Plato, the latter of Diogenes. Musarion a young courtesan, whom in the days of his splendour he had loved, but who had refused to listen to his suit, now, moved by his sorrows, comes to visit him. Ashamed to be seen in his present humble condition, Phantias refuses an interview; but Musarion persists, and at last prevails. The friends arrive. They order a supper, of which they force the recluse to partake. While at table, Musarion victoriously defends the doctrines of Epicurus against his assailants. The hours pass on unheeded. The disciple of Diogenes falls dead-drunk under the table. The Platonist makes love, in no very Platonic form, to one of Musarion's female slaves, and in short, Phantias convinced of the folly alike of his misanthropy and of his high-flown expectations yields to Musarion's generous affection, and permits her to share his retreat.

In justice to Wieland we subjoin a translation of a few of the verses, premising that if their grace and melody do not answer the reader's expectations, the fault lies in our version, not in the original.

Wearied upon the grass he sinks again,  
Unmoved he gazes on the landscape fair,  
Unmoved he hears the nightingale's sweet strain,  
Her tender lay soothes not his bosom's care.  
The gloomy night of inward grief and pain  
Hangs o'er his soul, and darkens all things there.  
Since the last obole from his purse has fled  
His friends have disappeared, and flattery's self is dead.



Yes false and fleeting as the wind, are all  
 Friendship's fond vows, and love's deceitful smile.  
 Soon as the golden showers no longer fall,  
 Cold is the heart that lures us with its wile.  
 Soon as the goblet's dry, in vain we call  
 On our Patroclus! Yes; that metal vile  
 Is stronger still than virtue, wit or beauty.  
 That gone — the swarm goes too, and Lais talks of duty.

Now thrill'd and saddened by the mournful truth,  
 How vain those dreams so transient, tho' so bright  
 Which lull us in the rosy days of youth,  
 As in an atmosphere of life and light,  
 When Man's a God unto himself in sooth,  
 Phantias resolved this time to choose aright,  
 To tear himself, although 'twas somewhat late,  
 From the delusive past, and brave the storms of fate.

The next two verses are from the last scene :

His Mentor was no cynic, old and grey,  
 With ragged locks uncombed and wildly streaming;  
 Who taught like Zeno—but—at least they say—  
 Drank like Silenus, when the wine was gleaming;  
 But love in all its radiance bright and gay,  
 Tho' light and thoughtless in its outward seeming;  
 Wiser than sages in that magic spell  
 That wins all hearts; and say, who can teach half so well?

And Phantias soon the wholesome truth confess'd  
 Philosophy dwells in these words divine,  
 To deem what God and Nature give the best,  
 And uncomplainingly the rest resign.  
 To wear our virtues throned within our breast,  
 And to do good, without the wish to shine;  
 And whether bless'd or wretched—to know well  
 This world was ne'er designed for Paradise or Hell.

Though in verse and prose the most amorous of mortals, Wieland since his unfortunate love for Julia, had in reality remained insensible to the charms of the female sex. It would seem that the somewhat florid descriptions in which he loved to luxuriate, served as a safety-valve to his passions and prevented any dangerous explosion. But, at length, yielding rather to the wishes of his parents than to his own, he determined on quitting the state of single-blessedness, and selected as his wife the daughter of a merchant at Augsburg, less distinguished by mental accomplishments than by domestic virtues and a gentle guileless nature.

"I have taken a wife", he writes, "or rather a wifie, for it is a tiny, though charming and amiable being, and I scarcely know how her friends and relations could be induced to give her to me. She has few or no brilliant qualities which, (because perhaps I have had opportunities of getting weary of them) I have not desired in the choice of my wife. She is an innocent, joyous, gentle creature, untainted by the world; not exactly pretty, but pretty enough for an honest man who wishes a wife for himself, and free from those pretensions which are always found united with great beauty". Many of his letters both at this period and later prove how happy he was in his choice. He repeatedly calls her his guardian angel, whose unpretending love and tenderness softened every sorrow and every care, at whose side life assumed a fairer and brighter aspect. He acknowledges indeed she never read a single line of his poems; so much the better for all

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(1) *Gruber's Leben von Wieland*. Vol. 2d.

parties. Indeed no one could be more admirably suited to Wieland's peculiar temperament which, despite his many virtues, was not always the easiest to deal with. She endured his occasional bursts of anger with angelic patience, for which when the temporary outbreak was over, he repaid her by redoubled tenderness. — "My life" — he writes — "goes on better than you suppose. My afternoons are my own, and my diplomatic labours cost me little time or trouble. Without vanity, I am one of the most rapid scribblers in all Suabia. I want nothing here but an agreeable little house of my own. I wait patiently for fortune, though there is not much probability of her coming, and to make up for her absence I have hired a little summer-residence at the gates of Biberach. Here I have a charming view; I am at once in town and country. The fawns; the dryads and the wood-nymphs appear to console me. When my visions give place to reality, I open my eyes and perceive that these imaginary goddesses are no other than simple rustic mortals, and occasionally young boys of the neighbourhood who have come to bathe in the river. I love the scent of the new-mown hay. I like to see the corn thrashed and the sheaves bound; these country occupations have for me no common charms. At times my eyes turn to the churchyard to my left, — there repose the bones of my fathers; there I too shall sleep in my turn, and the great lesson teaches me to live in peace till the hour which is to reunite me to them. Mills and isolated farms, a hamlet which crowns a verdant valley on the slope of the hill, a dense forest through whose sombre

verdure the village church-spire glitters in all its whiteness — such is my prospect; when the setting sun lights up the distant mountains that bound the horizon and shines upon the turrets of the ancient castle, the landscape assumes a still more picturesque aspect. I forget all the vexations of life, and scribble on”.

In the year 1788 Wieland visited Coblentz where he once more met Sophia de la Roche, who with her husband and family had removed thither after the death of their protector Count Stadion. Jacobi, who was present, thus describes the meeting. “We heard the sound of a carriage and presently saw Wieland drive into the court-yard. La Roche rushed down stairs. I followed him eagerly, and we received our friend at the door. Meanwhile Mad<sup>me</sup> de la Roche had likewise made her appearance. Wieland had inquired after her with some impatience and seemed most anxious to see her. All at once he perceived her. I saw him tremble, he stepped aside, threw his hat down with a movement at once hasty and tremulous and hastened towards her. Sophia approached him with extended arms; but instead of accepting her embrace he seized her hand and stooped down to conceal his features. Sophia with a heavenly look bent over him and said in a tone which neither clarion nor hautboys could imitate. “Wieland, Wieland! Yes, it is you — you are ever my dear good Wieland!” Roused by this touching voice, Wieland lifted up his head, looked in the weeping eyes of the friend of his youth, and let his face sink into her arms.”

We are not told what the husband, who was present, thought of this scene. It is evident that in the hearts of both Sophia and Wieland, still lingered the sparks of their early love; but the meeting was brief and the emotions it roused, forgotten, on Wieland's side at least, in home duties and literary pursuits.

In the summer of 1769 Wieland received an invitation from the Elector of Mainz to assume the direction of the University of Erfurt, which from neglect or mismanagement had fallen into utter disrepute. It was the earnest wish of the Elector to restore it to its former importance, and Wieland's high reputation seemed to point him out as the very man for the undertaking. The prospect of a more extended sphere of action, of aiding in the promotion of his country's literature, and perhaps the title of privy councillor offered in addition, induced him, though not without hesitation, to accept the proposal. He found his new duties heavier than he had anticipated. Into such utter discredit had the university sunk, that some thirty students were all still even nominally attached to it, and of these the greater part spent their time in anything but study. The few professors yet remaining, annoyed by their want of auditors hurried over their lectures, and regarded the whole affair as hopeless. Wieland was not a man to be easily discouraged. He set about the undertaking with his usual energy, and his efforts were crowned with success. The empty benches were soon crowded with students, eager to hear the man whose reputation at that time filled Germany. Though his duties as professor did not entirely withdraw him from literary

pursuits, yet two little poems "Cupid Accused" and "Comlabres" were the only productions of this period. Both are light and graceful; the aim moral or intended to be so; but the warmth of the descriptions too often degenerates into license. Yet at that very moment we find Wieland giving up the society of the most agreeable of his acquaintance; simply because he admitted to his intimacy persons of questionable morality!

Meanwhile the favour manifested to Wieland by the Elector, the innovations introduced, and the dread of others disgusted the professors, who still clung to their antiquated forms and customs, and they assailed Wieland with the utmost violence both as a writer and an individual. Their cause was adopted by the clergy, who at that period were in Germany too frequently both intolerant and illiterate, opposing the enlightenment of the rest of the community lest it should render their own ignorance more apparent. The licentious character of so many of Wieland's works gave a show of justice to their invectives, which all the purity of his life could not suffice to silence. He was deeply wounded by these attacks, the more so because he felt, that in one point at least, they were not without truth. He began to reap the fruit he had sown. Had his productions been stainless as his conduct, with what proud contempt could he have looked down upon these slanderers! How easily would he have repelled their calumnies! As it was, his position became from day to day more disagreeable, and he longed ardently for an opportunity to leave Erfurt. He sequestered himself as much as

possible from society, and sought in his domestic circle a refuge from those annoyances which elsewhere beset him.

"Our dear Wieland", writes Heinse, author of the romance of "Ardinghello", who visited him in 1771, "has two little girls with whom he plays like a child. I wish you could see him. Every one of their looks, their movements or their smiles, is a revelation for this observer of the human heart. Ah! if the citizen of Geneva, author of the 'Inequality between Men', could for an instant witness these charming scenes, he would return quickly to Paris to burn every copy of his book, or at least he would solemnly retract the opinion he has expressed on the happiness of the human race in a savage state, where the ties of family are without strength, marriage without love, and desire without restraint." (1)

The work of Rousseau indeed on the natural condition of man threw all Germany into commotion. On none did it produce a more powerful effect than on Wieland; but his natural good sense soon enabled him to perceive the fallacy of those arguments which by their eloquence and brilliancy imposed on so many keen and lofty intellects. In the little romance "Coxcox and Kikiquetzel", he parodies, in a lively manner not unworthy of Voltaire himself, many of the opinions of Rousseau.

Despite home joys and constant literary occupations, Erfurt continued anything but a pleasant residence to Wieland, and it was with no little

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(1) Heinse's Briefe, Göttingen.

delight that he received the proposal of the dowager Duchess of Weimar, to repair to her court as tutor to the young duke then entering on his sixteenth year. The position was in every way suitable. It placed him in the circle of the educated, the nobly born and the refined, in the circle in which his wit, humour and genius could be appreciated. The emoluments would in our eyes appear ludicrously small. One thousand guldens, or about ninety pounds per annum, were promised for three years; to be followed, when the term above-mentioned had expired, by the magnificent pension of three hundred guldens or twenty-three pounds a year for life! <sup>(1)</sup> But everything in this world is comparative, and this sum, insignificant as it now seems, was at that period not to be despised. The prices of all the necessaries of life, even now lower in most parts of Germany than in other lands, were then incredibly small. Beef was five kreutzers or about one penny three farthings a pound, veal four kreutzers or less than three halfpence. House-rent, wood and every thing else was in proportion. <sup>(2)</sup> Wieland besides was the least mercenary of men. He knew the court of Weimar was poor. He accepted the proposition and proceeded to his new home, after bidding a grateful and affectionate farewell to the Elector who sincerely regretted his departure.

Weimar, so celebrated since as the residence of Goethe and Schiller, was then an insignificant little

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<sup>(1)</sup> Döring, *Leben von Wieland*.

<sup>(2)</sup> „*Hamburger Correspondent*“, 1770.



town with no attraction save the grace and talents of its ruler, the dowager Duchess Amelia, and its pleasant situation on the banks of the Ilm. The park in which the principal charm of the place now consists, was then undreamt of. The streets were narrow and miserably paved. Lights there were none. Indeed many small towns in Germany, Cassel for instance, do not boast any, even at the present day. But Wieland, the greater part of whose life had been passed between Biberach and Erfurt, was not likely to notice or to feel these deficiencies, and even if he had, they would have been speedily forgotten in the kindness of his reception, in the affability of the duchess and the amiable manners of her son. "The Duchess", he writes to one of his intimate friends, "unites all the graces of the woman with the dignity of a queen. She received me with infinite affability, would not permit me to stoop to kiss her hand; told me she hoped we should soon be excellent friends, and that my residence at Weimar would not count among the most disagreeable days of my existence. She dwelt much on her desire that her son should early acquire a true love for literature, that by-and-by, when oppressed by the cares of government he might find in literary pursuits the consolation, which they had always afforded her." (1)

The appointment of Wieland to this high post did not, however, escape censure. Strict moralists pointed to certain passages of the "Musarion" and "Agathon", and asked, with too much show of reason, whether

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(1) Wieland's *ausgewählte Briefe*, Vol. 2nd.

it was to the author of pictures such as these, that the education of their future prince should be intrusted. But the duchess, virtuous as she was, had not entirely escaped the pernicious influence of the philosophy of her day. Her excessive love of amusement had perhaps somewhat blunted the keen edge of her moral feelings; at all events she adhered to the plausible though delusive theory that licentious descriptions are powerless to injure any virtue, save that which is not worth the guarding. Wieland proved himself not unworthy of her confidence. So far as we can learn, the influence he exerted over his pupil was decidedly favourable to virtue and morality, and if in after days Carl August, amid a thousand virtues, displayed some tendency to licentious habits, it is scarcely fair to ascribe it to the lessons of a tutor whose own life was a model of purity, and whose unsullied honour is a sufficient guarantee that, whatever his opinions, he would never have abused so sacred a trust.

"The Duke," he writes to one of his intimate friends, in speaking of that prince so well known as the friend and patron of Goethe, "is a handsome youth, tall, slender, with fine intelligent eyes, and an expression at once imposing and attractive. His manners greatly pleased me; they united the dignity of the prince with the respect due from a boy of sixteen to a man of forty — from a pupil to the master to whom his education was about to be confided. He has excellent abilities, a kind heart, and a truly royal soul." "The court," he adds in a subsequent letter, "live in the most simple manner imaginable; there is

very little ceremony or etiquette of any sort. Now and then there are balls which I am sometimes compelled to attend, though I avoid them as much as possible. The other evening there was a fancy one, the most elegant I have yet seen. The duchess appeared as Venus in robes of white starred with gold, and never did the goddess herself look more lovely. She has proposed my giving her lessons in Greek. We are to begin as soon as the days are somewhat longer. Her great desire is to visit Italy — I too — oh! with what delight could I linger amid those scenes of loveliness. It seems to me as though my soul requires a warmer clime for its full expansion. It grows cold amid the snows of the north.”<sup>(1)</sup>

But neither the brilliant circle in which he now found himself, nor the congenial society of men of wit and genius, could weaken Wieland's attachment for his home and family. He was never so happy as when surrounded by his little ones, watching their play, joining in their games and laughing as heartily as any of them. About this time he undertook the editorship of a periodical, the “Mercury”, in which he strenuously defended the principles of the French dramatists, and particularly the unities which Lessing's vigorous attacks had almost exploded in Germany. This called forth the indignation of the Göttingen school, and its principal members who were just then beginning to distinguish themselves in their new literary career, were loud in their denunciations. Herder was no

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(1) Wieland's Briefe. Vol. 8th p. 210.

less indignant, and he at least was not an opponent to be despised. A severe review of the "Goetz von Berlichingen", the first production of that great genius just bursting on the world, appeared in the "Mercury" of 1773, and deeply wounded the young writer. He revenged himself by a dramatic satire, "God's Heroes and Wieland," in which all the faults and affectations which occasionally disfigure Wieland's style, are cleverly satirized. Wieland wisely and generously laughed at this caricature of himself, and far from feeling any indignation, praised it in his "Mercury", predicting the fame that was one day to crown the author's name. The "Mercury" had great and brilliant success. Henceforward it was here that all Wieland's works made their first appearance. "For the inquiries into our national history", says one of his biographers in a notice prefixed to a cabinet edition of his works, "this 'Mercury' is of unspeakable value. Nothing new arose in the realms of art, science, literature or politics, which was not treated by Wieland and his fellow labourers." How zealously the poet performed his appointed task, is evident from the fact that out of the sixteen volumes of his collected works, eight are composed of articles written for that periodical alone. Among these was the "Agathedemon", a sort of pendant to "Perigrine Proteus", in which he endeavours to explain by natural causes, according to the theory of the nineteenth century, the various miracles attributed to that mysterious personage Apollonius of Thyana, many of which he attributes to magnetic influence. The "Agathedemon" was followed by the "Abderites"

which presents an amusing picture of the society of Wieland's native town, under the mask of a Greek satire. This work called forth a cry of indignation from those who felt, or fancied themselves aggrieved; but this only increased its general popularity. Shortly afterwards appeared his poems and stories. The satirical style he had lately adopted, here gave place to one more simple and unpretending, in accordance with the growing taste for what was called the "natural school."

The three years of Wieland's engagement as tutor to the young duke had now expired. Carl August had attained his majority, and his mother placed in his hands the reins of government she had held for seventeen years, with a grasp at once so gentle and so firm. A pension of one thousand guldens, or two thousand and five hundred francs a year, was settled on him by his late pupil, who always evinced a grateful regard for him; but the arrival of Goethe in the first flush of literary fame, so completely engrossed the attention both of the duke and the courtiers, as to throw Wieland completely into the shade. He bore this with his usual equanimity, and did full justice to the more powerful genius of his youthful rival. "Goethe," he says in one of his letters to Merk, "will remain here as long as Carl August lives, and would that he could live to the age of Nestor. He has hired a house that looks like a little fortress, and it delights him to live there and fancy that he could defend himself against a whole regiment at least for a few days, so long as they did not burn it over his head. Frequently he invites

himself to sup with me; for the duke, with whom he dines every day, rarely sups except when he invites his court."

While apparently resting idly on his past laurels, Wieland was secretly devoting every leisure hour to the composition of his "Oberon", one of the most graceful, charming and attractive poems in its own peculiar style, which has ever appeared in modern times. Every line sparkles with airy grace and richness of imagination. It has indeed no pretensions to loftiness of conception, depth of feeling, sublimity or pathos; but in flight of fancy, freshness and brilliancy of description, wealth of imagery, and happy combination of plot and incident, it is almost unequalled. In harmony of versification, indeed, it stood in its own language alone; and the astonishment and admiration excited by the wonderful mastery displayed in modulating the German tongue to a harmony almost as perfect as that of Tasso, or Ariosto, contributed not a little to its success. The machinery in particular is admirably managed. Generally speaking, tales, in which the marvellous prevails, leave the heart cold and untouched. The reader feels secure that, happen what may, the guardian fairy will come forward to protect the hero or heroine, and save them in the worst crisis of their fate. He therefore can take but little interest in calamities which are certain to end happily at last. But in "Oberon", the painting is so vivid and so varied, the characters drawn with so much art, the supernatural so skilfully blended with the real, and so well kept in the background whenever not required for the harmony of

the tale, that the interest and sympathy of the reader are kept continually alive, though not to any painful degree. "Oberon," says Goethe in one of his letters to Lavater, "is a surprising performance. As long as poetry is poetry, gold gold, and crystal crystal, 'Oberon' will be admired as a master-piece of poetic skill." (1) "You have read 'Oberon,' "he says to Merk", and have been delighted with it as I was. I sent a laurel-crown to Wieland which seems to have given him great pleasure." (2)

The subject of "Oberon" is too well known to need more than a brief notice. It is founded on a story of French chivalry, "Huon de Bordeaux". The principal personages are Huon, Amanda, his bride, and Oberon; not the German elf, the Elberic of "King Ortnit", but the graceful fay of English dell and dingle, the Oberon of Shakespeare with his Titania by his side. We would willingly offer our readers some specimen of this charming poem; but to attempt to do that which Mr. Sotheby has already done so well would be a work of supererogation; to that version we refer our readers.

With "Oberon", Wieland for ever abandoned the realm of romantic poetry where he had achieved his greatest triumph, and returned to his beloved Greeks and Romans. His domestic happiness had continued almost unbroken, save by the premature death of some of his children. He had fourteen, of whom nine only survived their infancy. Wieland was so

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(1) Goethe's Briefe an Lavater.

(2) Goethe's Briefe an Merk.

tender a father, that the loss of each child, despite the many still left him, seemed like a link severed from his own existence. "Wounds of this nature", he exclaims, "are healed indeed by time; but the scars they leave behind remain as long as life itself."

Five and twenty years passed away at Weimar without his once feeling the wish to leave it. "I am bound," he writes to Gleim, "by a thousand silken ties. I have taken root in the ground, and in one word, how can I or my wife leave our children? Our house has become a little world for us; but you, dear Gleim, who have no such hindrances, come to us, and try for once how one lives in our house, where every moment, from some corner or other, a boy or girl creeps forth on whom one has not reckoned". "The years I have passed with my wife," he says in 1777, "have flitted by, without my once wishing myself unmarried; on the contrary, she and her existence are so intimately bound up with mine that I cannot leave her ten days without feeling something of the Swiss longing for home". "God," he writes on occasion of an illness which had threatened her life, "has saved me from a danger on which I cannot think without shuddering. I was near, or at least my fear and anguish made me believe, I was near losing the best of all wives, made for me alone. God and his angels have had pity on me and my poor children. We have our good little mother again; she is out of danger. I experience more and more, that all true human happiness is within the circle of domestic life. Every day I become more and more



the *man*, and every day I become better and happier. Labour is a pleasure to me, because I feel I am labouring for my children, and I am fully convinced that my calm trust in that mighty hand which weaves the web of our fate will not disappoint me or mine."

Wieland's family circle already so large, was increased by his mother, who came to spend the evening of her days with her son. She died about 1781. Kind and hospitable, he ever afforded a warm welcome to all his friends so far as his means allowed. For himself he had few or no expenses; his tastes were simple in the extreme, and remained the same amid the courtly circle at Weimar, as in his humble house in the secluded valley of Biberach. In 1787 a new guest appeared, Schiller, then on the threshold of his glorious literary career. Wieland with his usual cordiality, invited the youthful poet to his house, and Schiller thus describes the interview.<sup>(1)</sup> "Yesterday I was invited by Wieland, whom I reached through a group of lovely children. Our first meeting was like an acquaintance arranged before-hand. A moment settled every thing. "We will begin slowly," said Wieland, "we will take time to become something to each other." He marked out the tone of our future intercourse. What pleased me best was that he treated it as no passing acquaintance, but as a relation that was to continue and ripen into friendship. Our conversation turned on various subjects, in which he displayed great talent,

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(1) *Briefe an Körner*. Vol. 1st.

and gave me opportunity for doing the same if I could. We talked much on politics, on philosophy, something on Goethe. His exterior surprised me; by his countenance I should never have discovered what he really is. Yet when he speaks with warmth his features light up with animation. He likes to hear himself speak. His language is not flowing; but the tone is always firm and decided. On the whole, I was very much pleased with him. I was told afterwards it was not usual for him to adopt such a manner to an utter stranger, and undoubtedly goodwill and kindly feeling pervaded his whole behaviour. He seemed to linger with pleasure on the idea of my youth and of the space that lay before me". "We will act upon each other", he said, and added "that though he was too old to change, he was not above the reach of improvement". — "I remained two hours with him, at the end of which he was obliged to go to his club. Wieland is somewhat isolated here; as he himself told me, he lives only for his family and his writings. The former I have not yet seen; I am to be introduced to them on my next visit". "Yesterday", he says, in a subsequent letter, "I was from four to ten in Wieland's society. In the political world he declared no honest man could either receive or retain any exalted post. This he proved by the example of Turgot, whom he holds in high esteem." Wieland always continued on amicable terms with Schiller, and although the fits of hastiness, to which, as we have already observed, he was liable now and then, disturbed the calm and even tenor of their intimacy, these interruptions were but brief, and never

really impaired the good understanding between them. "Wieland himself acknowledges this inequality of humour", writes Schiller, "and he afterwards entreats forgiveness like a child. There is still something astonishingly youthful about him", he adds, "his house suits me exactly; all his family are excellent people, and each individual has a certain degree of vivacity, understanding or some peculiarity which renders him remarkable. I am certain you would have become attached to them."

Wieland had now reached his seventieth year; but his eye was not dimmed, nor had his step lost its elasticity. Still, as time crept on, his early love of nature returned with redoubled ardour, and with the sum he had contrived, we scarcely know how, to save from his modest pension and the proceeds of his works, he purchased a small estate called Osmanstadt, not far from Weimar. To this new abode he removed with his family in 1778. Three of his daughters had been happily married; but in one year two became widows, and were compelled, with their young children, to return to the shelter of their father's roof. There too the following summer, he welcomed once more the object of his youthful love, now a widow. Great changes had taken place in the position of Sophia since they had last met. Her husband had long been the favourite of fortune. He had been by turns Councillor and Secretary of State, and his wife thus found herself in the position for which her grace and talents so eminently fitted her. Amid the amusements of the world, however, she still found time for literary composition. Her "Pomona",

her "Letters from Mannheim" enjoyed considerable popularity in their day, and may still be found in many a German library. But in 1780 died Maria Theresa. The Imperial Ambassador at the court of the Elector demanded a change of ministry. It was conceded. De Laroche with his colleagues, fell; he was deprived of all his offices, and had nothing left save a small pension allowed him by government. His wife endured this calamity with unshaken courage but De Laroche never recovered the blow. He died a few years afterwards. Left a widow, in narrow circumstances, Sophia turned to those pursuits which had so often charmed her leisure hours, to eke out her scanty means. Unfortunately, these did not long avail her. Her later works bear the traces of labour and effort; her literary fame rapidly declined. But in the tenderness of her children, in the sympathy of her friends, she found consolation for all her sorrows and disappointments. "I am in Wieland's house", she writes, "I have seen once more this friend of my childhood, and the same roof covers us. What a difference between these and the days of our youth! How completely is all changed for us! Our hopes—our fears, our very existence! At the moment I am writing, Wieland is improvising on his harpsichord, and his exquisite harmony and brilliant touch recal the days of Biberach. The same notes strike my heart and ear, all the emotions of my youth once more overcome me. To attempt to describe them were vain; to analyse them, vainer still. The house of my friend is at once elegant and rural. It has a fine kitchen-garden extending to a beau-

tiful wood, which in its turn stretches to the banks of the river. I dine every day with the Patriarch and his four charming daughters in the library, which commands a view of an extensive and verdant meadow. I enquired who was that robust and handsome youth mowing the grass around a thicket of roses. It was his son. I for my part assist the mother and daughters in their household duties. Country life reigns here in all its charming simplicity. Goethe came to dine with us the other day; nothing could be more simple than his manners. It was delightful to see these two poets seated side by side, without jealousy, pretension or affectation, calling each other by their Christian names, as they did in their youth, resembling much less two *beaux esprit* than two good merchants of Gröningen united by the ties of affection and relationship. The daughters of the great Herder shortly after joined us. Beauty, goodness, wit, genius and sincere affection, all united in this little room". (1)

It was indeed a curious and touching spectacle, to behold these two men both so gifted, but of genius so opposite, seated side by side in close and intimate communion. The one in the pride and flower of his glorious manhood, in the full flush of a genius which as yet had borne only its first fruits, but which already began to claim the admiration not only of Germany but of Europe; the other, arrived at what is ordinarily regarded as the term of existence allotted to man; but still preserving his

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(1) Leben von Wieland, von Gruber. Vol. 2d. p 314.

vigour of mind of and body, his brow yet encircled by the laurels with which his "Oberon" had crowned him, and which were at least to remain in all their freshness even when the rest had faded. It is infinitely to Wieland's credit that although the rising fame of Goethe, and later that of Schiller, already began to eclipse his own, far from evincing the slightest envy or irritation, he rejoiced in their celebrity, as enhancing the literary glory of his country. Even the satirical attacks with which, in the exuberance of youthful wit and insolence, the younger poets of the day assailed him, might wound, but could not embitter his generous nature. The theories of Kant and Fichte were, however, too diametrically contrary to his own to admit of his passing them by in silence. His observations were mild and conciliatory; but even the most temperate opposition was regarded as a crime by the adherents of these new systems; and not content with denouncing Wieland's philosophy—no very difficult task—they attacked his fame, both as a poet and a man. "Calm", says his biographer, "in the assurance of his own merit and in his well-earned laurels, he left the lists, and trusted to time to do him justice.<sup>(1)</sup> He sought consolation in his beloved classical studies; and in the year 1799 produced one of the most remarkable of his prose works "The Aristippes", which may be said to contain the resumé of his own literary life. "The brilliant days of the great Pericles", observes Hildebrand, "with all their wonders of grace and beauty, their

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(1) Döring, *Leben von Wieland*.

errors and their follies, are laid before us. From the bower of roses of Lais, we are led to the dungeon of Socrates; from the workshop of the Artist to the walls of the Academy, from Athens to Syracuse".<sup>(1)</sup> Socrates is not the only person of importance introduced. We have the comic poet Aristophanes, the divine Plato, indeed almost all the celebrated men of the period. Still it must be confessed, that, as in "Agathon", the illusion is often broken by observations and expressions somewhat out of place in the mouth of an inhabitant of ancient Athens. Still the work possesses merits of no common order.

Wieland's life hitherto had been strewn with flowers; but he was not to escape the lot of humanity. The loss of a favourite grandchild had already deeply tried his affectionate heart; but a heavier stroke was at hand. On November the 9<sup>th</sup> 1801, death bereaved him of the beloved partner of his existence, the being whom, to use his own expression, "he had loved above all earthly things", in whom his very existence seemed to be bound up. Wieland felt the blow deeply; and although he recovered it to a certain extent, he never regained his former gaiety. His beloved retreat had now lost all its charms for him. The terrible war with France, had at once lessened the value of landed property, and increased the price of every thing else. Wieland's crops failed and an opportunity of disposing of the estate, although at considerable loss, presenting itself, he gladly availed himself of it, returning to spend the remainder of

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(1) *Hildbrand, Geschichte der deutschen Literatur von Lessing bis auf die Gegenwart*. Vol. 1st.

his days at Weimar. "The very morning", he wrote to a friend, "I concluded the sale, I received from the President of the French National Institute the notification that I had been elected member of that body". Despite Wieland's sincere modesty, this marked distinction could not but be agreeable to him, the more so as it had been purchased neither by flattery nor even by unmingled approbation; for though, like every liberal spirit, he had hailed with delight the first dawn of the French revolution, he had turned with unconcealed horror from the crimes and excesses with which it was so speedily soiled. Still more grateful to his heart was the warm affection with which the Ducal House of Weimar welcomed his return. He was regarded indeed almost as a member of the family. He was the daily guest of the dowager Duchess, and the reigning Duke, his former pupil, evinced towards him an affectionate regard, inferior only to that which he shewed towards Goethe. Further honours awaited the declining years of Wieland, not it is true unmingled with sorrow and suffering. In 1806 the fearful storm of war which had already burst over the land, fell in all its fury on the peaceful valley of Weimar. The battle of Jena forced the Duke to fly, and decided the fate of Germany. But while the bullets poured down upon the town, Napoleon gave special orders that the abode of Wieland should be respected, and had a guard placed before the door. It was too late, however; the house had been already pillaged, though to the poet himself no insult had been offered. The next morning Marshal Ney paid him a visit. He found him in a room stripped



of all furniture with exception of a single chair on which the old man was seated, calmly contemplating the desolation around. On perceiving the Marshal, he rose and begged him to be seated; but Ney taking him by the hand reconducted him courteously to the chair he had just quitted, observing with a profound bow that "he knew too well whose place it was to remain standing before the other." Three years later, in 1809, during the conferences at Erfurt, Napoleon, with the assembled princes then attending his steps, condescended to visit for a few days the court of Weimar. The conqueror was followed by a troop of French actors, among whom was the celebrated Talma, and Voltaire's "Death of Cæsar" was announced for the following day. Wieland who had already been invited to a ball at court, an honour which he had declined on the pretext of his age and infirmities, could not resist his desire of seeing the great tragedian, and appeared accordingly in the place assigned him in the Grand Duke's box. His striking and peculiar countenance, his antique costume and the little black cap he always wore, attracted the attention of Napoleon, and he enquired who he was. On learning that he was no other than the celebrated Wieland, he expressed a wish to see him when the tragedy was concluded; and the old man not a little flattered at this direct Imperial summons, presented himself at the ball which followed the theatrical performances. The letter in which he describes his interview with the victor has often been quoted, and is found in almost every biography of Wieland. Yet

the account is in itself so interesting that we shall make no apology for repeating it here. "Napoleon no sooner saw me", says Wieland, "than he advanced towards me to the other end of the room. The duchess presented me to him, and while she added a few words full of grace and kindness, the emperor's piercing eye remained fixed upon me. Never perhaps, was any human being endowed in a higher degree with the gift of reading the most secret thoughts of the human heart than this extraordinary man. He read me; he saw that notwithstanding my reputation, I was free from affectation or pretension. As soon as he perceived with whom he had to do, his tone and manners became open, confidential and tranquil. The sovereign and the conqueror disappeared. He conversed with me as with the friend of his childhood; he himself was only the private individual. The interview lasted more than half an hour, and, as at the end of that time, I was tired with standing, I asked without ceremony, permission to retire. Go then, said he in the most cordial manner—and good evening". We had spoken on a variety of subjects, and above all of Cæsar, the hero of that tragedy of Voltaire, which the French actors had just been performing. "He is one of the greatest men of all history", said the conqueror, "and but for one unpardonable fault, he would have been the greatest of all." I sought in vain to guess what that fault might be; he read my uncertainty in my countenance. "You do not know what fault?", he continued—"Cæsar had long known those who assassinated him; he should have forestalled them". That, I thought to myself, is an error into

which you are not likely to fall. From Cæsar our conversation turned to the Romans, the most renowned people in the world according to Napoleon. As to the Greeks, he had little esteem for them. 'What', he said, 'was that quarrelsome rivalry of two or three little democracies, of two or three little miserable cities? The Romans changed the face of the world and conquered it.' I endeavoured to point out the beauties of Grecian literature. Napoleon treated it with as much contempt as their policy. He made but one exception to his general condemnation, and that was Homer, 'whom I like better than Ossian', he said."

As to Ariosto and similar light and graceful poets, he treated them with contempt, precisely as the Cardinal d'Este treated the celebrated poet of his household. In striking the author of "Orlando Furioso", he forgot, doubtless, that he was giving a box on the ear to the author of "Oberon". I ventured to ask him, why, in restoring the religion of France, he had not endeavoured to impress it with a philosophical tinge, more in accordance with the spirit of the country and the age. "My dear Wieland", he replied with a smile, "my religion was not made for philosophers; they believe neither in me nor in my religion; when I work for them I shall make something very different." Nothing could exceed the consideration with which the emperor treated me. This conversation had been full of grace, kindness and amiability; but despite himself and the flattering nature of this interview, I felt, when it was terminated, as though I had been conversing with a man of bronze.<sup>(1)</sup>

(1) *Leben von Wieland*, von Gruber, p. 419 to 421.

Chancellor Müller gives a somewhat different account of this interview. "What age", asked Napoleon, "do you consider the happiest?"—"That is difficult to decide" replied the poet. "If we regard only mental culture and social freedom, the Greeks may be considered as peculiarly happy. The Romans too, despite their many bad emperors, had some who deserve to be called the good genii of mankind. Other nations may likewise boast of good rulers from time to time; but on the whole the history of the world seems to me to move in a perpetual circle. Good and evil, vice and virtue alternate; and it is the task of philosophy every-where, to seek out the best and to render the evil endurable by making the good more prominent. "All very well" said the emperor; "but it is not right to paint every thing in black as Tacitus does. True he is a skilful artist, a bold and seducing colourist; but he cares too much for effect. History will have no illusions; her duty is to enlighten and to teach; not only to sketch impressive pictures. Tacitus has not sufficiently developed the causes, the inward motives of events. He has not investigated with sufficient care the mystery of thought and action, and their reciprocal effect, to leave a just and impartial judgment for the benefit of posterity. The Roman emperors were not nearly so bad as he has described them." Napoleon then turned the conversation to the Christian religion and its history, particularly the grounds of its rapid propagation. "I see in this", he observed, "a remarkable reaction of the Grecian spirit against the Roman. Greece, vanquished by physical strength, reconquered the do-

main of intellectual supremacy by accepting and fostering that beautiful germ which Providence had sown for the happiness of mankind." "Besides", he added advancing quite close to Wieland and holding up his hand so that no one but I could hear it, "'Tis a great question whether Jesus Christ ever existed." Wieland, who had hitherto merely played the part of an attentive listener, here eagerly replied: "I know, Sire, that there are some madmen who doubt it. But it seems to me just as absurd as it would to doubt the existence of Julius Cæsar or of your Majesty;" on which the Emperor clapped him on the shoulder and said "good, good".

"Philosophers", continued the old man, "torment themselves to build up new systems; but they seek in vain for a better one than Christianity, by which man is reconciled with himself, and public order and peace are secured at the same time as individual hope and happiness." <sup>(1)</sup>

It is probable that Napoleon proposed the above argument merely to see if Wieland's opinions were really of the nature ascribed to him; at all events he appeared well pleased with his reply. It is rather difficult to reconcile the discrepancy between these two accounts except by supposing that both were incomplete.

Despite the infirmities which began to creep upon him, Wieland's literary activity continued almost unabated.

At the age of eighty he completed a translation of "Cicero's Letters", which betrays not a trace of enfeebled

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(1) *Rüßler's Erinnerungen der Kriegsjahren*, p. 243.

intellect. In 1809 he was attacked with a severe and dangerous illness, and soon after his recovery was overturned, and his collar-bone broken. Still, this time too, his strong constitution triumphed, and he remained almost free from suffering till January 1813, when a paralytic stroke put an end to his existence. His end was calm, tranquil and happy. Feeling its approach, he sent for his children and grand-children, bade them an affectionate farewell, and sank calmly to rest. He was buried in the garden of Osmanstadt, the proprietor of which gladly acceded to the wish the old man had expressed, to sleep beside his beloved wife, who had been interred in that spot. Every honour which the respect and affection of his Prince and the City where he had spent so many years of his long life could devise, attended his obsequies. A pyramid of white marble was erected upon the spot, which bears the following inscription composed by Wieland himself: "Three souls who loved each other during life. Their mortal relics sleep within the same sepulchre." (1)

Thus ended the existence of this singular man whose practice and philosophy were so strangely at variance with each other. In our appreciation of his genius, we have sought to hold the just balance between the enthusiastic admiration once lavished indiscriminately on his works, and the equally indiscriminate attacks since levelled against them. We cannot indeed quite agree with the first part of Goethe's generous dictum "that in a couple of centuries, the shadows which his opponents so industriously

(1) Gruber's Leben, p. 465.

sought to point out in his productions will be scarcely noticed." We believe that they will and ought to remain the objects of severe censure. But on the other hand, we are convinced that, while his prose works will probably sink into complete oblivion, he will maintain his place in the literature of his native land as one of its most gay, witty and graceful poets. Such indeed is the light in which he is regarded by all right-judging critics. Such is the appreciation which has induced the inhabitants of Weimar to place his statue beside those of Goethe and Schiller, as is fully proved by the discourse pronounced on the occasion of the festival which celebrated the Inauguration of these groups but a few months ago. "Wieland", said the eloquent speaker, "was the first German author whose works were translated and admired by our neighbours, and by means of whom our poetry was replaced amid the ranks of European Literature. Goethe expressly called him his master. His whole existence flowed on like a source fructifying and cheering the spirit of the nation, and our latest posterity will hail him, even as we hail him now as the immortal Wieland." (1)

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(1) Rede bei der Enthüllung des Wieland-Denkmales, gehalten von A. Scholl. Weimar, September 1857.

## CHAPTER IV.

### HERDER.

HIS CHILDHOOD.—PASSIONATE LOVE OF STUDY.—STRAIGHTENED CIRCUMSTANCES.—REMOVAL FROM HOME.—BECOMES SURGEON'S ASSISTANT.—ENTERS THE CHURCH.—DEPARTURE FOR RIGA.—"FRAGMENTS FOR GERMAN LITERATURE".—"CRITISCHE; WÄLDER".—IS INVITED TO ACCOMPANY THE PRINCE OF HOLSTEIN IN HIS TRAVELS.—FIRST MEETING WITH CAROLINE FLACHSLAND.—LEAVES THE PRINCE.—IS OPERATED ON AT STRASBURG.—ACQUAINTANCE WITH GOETHE.—COMPARISON.—IS APPOINTED CHAPLAIN TO COUNT WILLIAM OF BÜCKEBURG.—THE COUNT AND HIS DOMINIONS.—MARRIAGE.—LEAVES BÜCKEBURG FOR WEIMAR.—ESSAY ON HEBREW POETRY.—ACQUAINTANCE WITH SCHILLER.—"IDEAS ON PHILOSOPHY".—VISIT TO ITALY.—LETTERS.—"VOICES OF THE PEOPLE".—THE CID.—ILLNESS AND DEATH.—REVIEW OF HIS WORKS.

Klopstock and Wieland, each in his own peculiar sphere, were poets and poets only; Lessing was both poet and critic; but far more the former than the latter. Herder likewise combined the two characters; but he was more the poet than the critic. Lessing had a keener appreciation of faults, Herder a more vivid sense of beauties. Lessing had greater strength, acuteness and originality; Herder greater delicacy of



taste and true poetic feeling. Still it is by his prose works that his name is principally celebrated; in his poetry, the true creative spirit, the torch of inspiration is utterly wanting.

Like most of those whose biographies we have recounted, Herder's life offers nothing strange or startling; its interest, like theirs, rests on the virtues and genius of the individual, on his influence over the literature of his age and country, rather than on his personal adventures.

Herder was of humble origin. His father was master of a village girls-school, at Mohringen in Prussia, but despite his narrow circumstances he contrived to support his family in honourable independence. The strictest economy, however, sufficed only to provide for the absolute necessities of life. "Ah", Herder would often say to his children in after days, 'how far happier is your lot than mine! My father was a strict man. Every duty must be performed to the moment. It was only by the aid of this strict regularity, that my parents could manage to make both ends meet. When my father was satisfied with me, his countenance lighted up; he would lay his hand upon my head and call me his Gottesfried, or peace of God. This was my sweetest reward".

Of his mother Herder always spoke as of a saint, and often would he dwell on her gentle sweetness and devoted affection. The business of the day was generally concluded with a psalm, in which parents and children joined. Then came evening prayers.

The paternal blessing was pronounced and the family retired to rest.

At seven years old Herder was sent to the Gymnasium then under the direction of a certain Grimm, a somewhat singular character, but whose reputation for talent and integrity more than counterbalanced his numerous excentricities. "Severe as he was", Herder used to say, "I owe him no common debt of gratitude. He insisted on our learning by heart the rules of the grammar, and on our repeating them again and again, till they were impressed upon our memory. He claimed and received the utmost reverence from his scholars; to such a degree, indeed, that we took off our hats as soon as we saw him or his dwelling in the distance. When we were diligent, he gladly evinced his approbation by taking us with him in his walks, in which we always had to gather him herbs for his tea. <sup>(1)</sup> Occasionally, as an extra-reward, he would give us a cup of this tea in his study with a little bit of sugar. With me he was generally well contented, and was really fond of me."

From early childhood, Herder was distinguished for his love of reading, and a book was his constant companion at meals and even in bed. He was likewise passionately fond of music and learned the harpsicord, although his musical knowledge was never very profound or extensive. But his greatest delight lay in lonely wanderings, and he would sometimes be found mute and motionless at the foot of a tree, apparently immersed in thought. In 1760 Frederick

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(1) Herb-tea is a favourite beverage in Germany.

Trescho, a preacher much celebrated in his day, was sent to Mohringen as deacon. He had seen Herder in his childhood and, struck even then by his insatiable thirst for knowledge, had predicted that he would obtain celebrity. Trescho was in delicate health; he had neither wife nor children, and feeling himself sad and lonely, he proposed to young Herder, then in his sixteenth year, to come and reside with him. The offer was gladly accepted, and here in the silence and tranquillity of his new home, he was enabled to devote himself more exclusively to the studies he so deeply loved. Not satisfied with consecrating the greater part of the day to literary pursuits, he even stole many hours from his slumbers. "One evening", says Trescho, "when Herder went to his bed-room with a lighted candle, I felt a secret uneasiness, lest he should forget to extinguish it, and in about half an hour I stole into his room. What was my terror when I found him undressed to his shirt, lying upon the sofa in the deepest slumber; at his feet a quantity of books old and new and in the middle the lighted candle! I cast a glance at the books; they were most of them, so far as I remember, Latin and Greek classics, and several German poets.—I extinguished the light and went to bed. The next morning, I inquired whether he was capable of making use of these books? He replied laconically that he endeavoured to understand them. And now I discovered that, instead of a mere schoolboy, I had before me a man who ought to be transferred into a completely different sphere of developement, if a species of mental murder was not to be committed. I gave

him occupation in his leisure hours which enabled him to acquire knowledge he hitherto had enjoyed no opportunity of obtaining. A short time afterwards I sent a fugitive poem to the bookseller at Königsberg. Young Herder undertook the task of copying, dispatching and sealing. A few days afterwards, the bookseller informed me that he had found another poem in the packet, so full of grace and talent that he had it immediately printed, and that it had met with great applause. At the same time he begged me to tell him the name of the writer. Who could it be but Herder? He did not deny it; but laughed and blushed".

In the midst of his beloved studies, one terrible anxiety weighed heavily on Herder's mind; he had now attained the age of eighteen, and being a Prussian subject, was liable at any moment to be called on to enter the service. From this dreaded fate he was saved by the surgeon of a regiment quartered in the town, who frequently visited Trescho, and who, struck by young Herder's tone and manner, offered to take him as an assistant. The proposal was hailed with unspeakable gratitude, and in 1762 he left Mohringen for Königsberg with his deliverer. But the poor youth soon discovered that the duties of a surgeon were as little to his taste as those of a soldier. The first time he was present at a dissection he fainted away. The same thing occurred again and again, till his friend and patron declared he was utterly unfit for the medical profession and advised his turning to some other. What was to become of him? One day while

ruminating on his unfortunate destiny, he met an old friend, Emmerich, a kindhearted man to whom he disclosed his deplorable condition and his desire to enter the church, adding his fears that he had not carried his studies far enough to pass his examination. The good Emmerich sought to calm his anxiety, urging him to persist in his purpose. The advice was followed. He was accepted as student of theology, and devoted himself heart and soul to his new career. So narrow were his finances, that, despite the generous aid of his friend, it was only by the strictest economy he could contrive to exist, and he often passed a whole day with no other food than a morsel of bread. His talents, industry and morality gradually attracted attention, and at Easter 1763 he was appointed tutor of the Collegium Fredericanum.

Indefatigable in the discharge of his duties, he soon acquired general esteem and affection. "In the year 1764", says Trescho, "I visited Königsberg, and Herder hastened to meet me.—What a change! But few traces of his former timidity remained, while of his industry, morality and talents I heard everywhere the highest praise. Intercourse with his fellow-men had acted beneficially upon his nature; he to whom formerly a man in a collar was terrible, could now fearlessly raise his glance to orders and diadems, as in the golden times the lamb played with the lion".<sup>(1)</sup>

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(1) *Erinnerungen von Herder, herausgegeben von seiner Frau. Von Müller.*

Among Herder's most intimate friends, was George Hamann, who exercised so important an influence over the literature of his time,<sup>(1)</sup> and the celebrated Kant, whose philosophy he detested, but for whose talents and virtues he entertained the highest respect and admiration. He insisted that by separating the empire of the soul and the feelings, by completely excluding from his system all voluntary mental activity, Kant destroyed the force and energy of human action; while by declaring the proofs, for and against revelation equally conclusive on both sides, he sapped the very foundation of religion. Neither our plan nor our limits admit of our entering into this discussion; but we think it is evident that Kant in his "*Kritik der reinen Vernunft*", has opened an abyss of scepticism which all his arguments in his "*Kritik der praktischen Vernunft*" as to the existence of God, or the immortality of the soul, can never fill up.

The peaceful tenor of Herder's life at Königsberg was broken by the death of his aged father, in 1763. Between the character of parent and son there had never existed any great sympathy; yet the youth deeply mourned his loss. Poor as he was, he hastened to make over his share of the slender paternal inheritance to his widowed mother, and, so soon as his means allowed, afforded her more effectual aid. It was about this time that he took orders, and soon after was invited to Riga as Director of the cathedral-school. His position did not admit of his refusing

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(1) Gervinus, Geschichte der deutschen Dichtung. Vol. 4th.

the offer, and with a heavy heart, he bade farewell to the frontiers of his native land. He arrived at Riga towards the end of November 1764, and here became exceedingly popular. His preaching, in particular, gained universal approbation. Although his church lay beyond the precincts of the town, it was always crowded. He found in Riga a new fatherland, kinder and more genial than the old. His stipend, if not large, was sufficient for his simple wants and in the affectionate admiration of those around him, his young genius received the stimulus it so much needed. In 1767 he received from St. Petersburg a proposal to undertake the direction of the Peter's-School lately founded there; but the council of Riga, unwilling to lose his services, appointed him preacher at the Gertrude-Church, a position superior to that he now held. This decided him; he gave up all ideas of quitting a town where he met with so much kindness and hospitality. But his clerical duties did not so engross his time as to divert him entirely from the still more congenial pursuit of literature, and in the year 1767 he produced his "Fragmente zur deutschen Literatur". "Here", says Gervinus, "he, like Lessing, places the works of the ancients in their true light, proving that he had read them with the inspiration of a Winkelman, with the care of a Hamann, and that he was better skilled than either in setting forth their beauties. His ear yet resounding with the grandeur of the poets of antiquity, his soul swelling with the presentiment of the loftier style which Klopstock had opened to our view, he contrasted with these noble productions, the

rough form of German verse, the pedantic verbosity of our prose. Rushing from one extreme to the other he ridiculed our so called classic authors and laughed at the pedants of purism." (1)

The "Fragments" at once attracted attention. The profound and varied erudition, the earnestness, often rising to eloquence, charmed even those who differed from the opinions of the writer. It passed rapidly through several editions and was translated into French and English.

This work was soon followed by the "Critische Wälder". This time it was against critics and criticism that Herder entered the lists. He maintained the superiority of the ruder and simpler forms of poetry, over the more artificial charms which modern times have lent her. He even ventured to attack the "Laocoon" insisting that Lessing makes corporeal suffering the predominant feeling in "Philoctetes", an idea which he rejects with indignation, declaring that in noble natures, the mind absolutely governs the body—and that no sufferings, however great, can overcome a really heroic soul.

In this argument he condemned himself; for no man was more easily overcome by indisposition. It soured his temper and paralyzed his mental efforts.

Meanwhile he continued to fulfil his duties as clergyman, and preached to the general satisfaction. His friends imagined him settled at Riga for life. But the desire to behold new scenes and countries had become uppermost in his mind. Besides, he had

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(1) Gervinus, Geschichte der deutschen Dichtung. Vol. 4th.



formed the plan of establishing an Institution for Education for which he hoped to obtain the support of government, and he wished previously to visit the best schools in England, France and Italy. On the 23<sup>rd</sup> of May, accordingly, he preached his farewell sermon to a numerous audience, few of whom could refrain from tears, and on the following day left Riga. He first directed his wandering steps to Nantes, and thence to Paris which, as the political centre of a mighty nation, had peculiar interest in his eyes. Through letters of introduction with which his friends had furnished him, he was admitted to the intimacy of Diderot, d'Alembert and many of the most celebrated men of the day, a singular society, it must be owned, for a Christian minister, but which happily failed to exercise any serious influence on his religious belief. With Diderot he was particularly charmed, and indeed the French, as a nation, made a most favourable impression on his mind. He was debating within himself whether he should venture to continue his journey, for his slender finances were nearly exhausted, when in 1769 he received a proposal from the Duke of Holstein to accompany his son, Prince Frederick, for three years on his travels. The offer was too tempting to be refused, and in 1770 we find him at Hamburg on his way to Holstein. Here he made the acquaintance of Lessing, with whom he contracted a friendship which, though occasionally interrupted by faults of temper on both sides, yet continued in the main unbroken. "I have spent fourteen delightful days with Lessing," he writes; "he is an extraordinary man."

Herder was received by the duke and duchess with the utmost courtesy and kindness. The latter, herself a woman of no common endowments, was particularly struck by his varied knowledge, his depth of thought and brilliant conversation. The young prince himself, soon became attached to him, and even the haughty Holstein nobility, then as now, the most aristocratic of their race, condescended to treat him with politeness and respect. Thus the journey commenced under the happiest auspices. At Darmstadt the Prince, whose mother was related to the Grand-Duke, lingered for a few days. Herder liked the quiet little town with its lovely park and picturesque neighbourhood; but he little imagined, as he trod its broad and silent streets, that he was there to meet the being who was to decide his future destiny.

Caroline Flachsland was but nineteen when Herder first beheld her. Educated by her widowed mother, who had been left in narrow circumstances with eight young children, she had enjoyed few opportunities for mental culture; but her native talent and love of study supplied, in a great degree, the want of education. They met at the house of Merk, so well known as the friend of Goethe, Schiller and indeed of all the gifted men of his day. Timid and retiring, the young girl at first scarcely attracted Herder's attention. Gradually, however, her gentle sweetness, her innocent grace charmed him, while her melancholy position (for she was dependent on an unkind and avaricious brother-in-law), touched his generous heart. In short he loved and, although his uncertain position

did not permit his entertaining any idea of immediate marriage, he did not hesitate to confess his affection, confiding in the goodness of Providence and his own unwearied efforts for better days. "Why my sweet friend", he writes Aug. 25<sup>th</sup>, his birthday, "why should we blush at sentiments so pure, so interwoven with all the holiest emotions of innocence and virtue?" (1)

Caroline who had loved from the first moment she beheld him, replied by a frank and fond avowal of her attachment, and a correspondence was agreed on, which continued, uninterrupted, till the long-wished for moment when he came forward to claim her as his own.

A few days after this event, Herder and the Prince left Darmstadt. At first all went on smoothly enough; but the peculiarities of the Prince's character, and circumstances not very clearly explained, soon darkened the sunny prospect. There were probably faults on both sides; for, despite the assurances of his tender wife that he was the most amiable of human beings, (2) we know from other and less partial sources that his temper, always somewhat uncertain, was easily stung to irritability; while his proud and sensitive nature was little able to endure the slightest neglect or misrepresentation. At Strasburg, therefore, he gave in his resignation, despite the many sacrifices the act entailed. But he resolved to profit by his stay in that town to have one of his eyes, affected from childhood

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(1) Herder's „Briefwechsel mit seiner Braut," herausgegeben von Herder und Dünker.

(2) „Erinnerungen von Herder, 1820, von sein Frau."

with fistula, operated on by an oculist celebrated throughout Germany. Here, however, all the surgeon's skill availed nothing, and, after long confinement and considerable suffering, Herder found himself no better than when he came. During this tedious period he was cheered by the constant visits of Goethe, then studying in the university of Strasburg. The difference between the two was indeed striking; but we cannot allow that it was so completely to the disadvantage of Herder as Goethe's most able and affectionate biographer Mr. Lewis would fain prove. We must remember that Goethe was wealthy, flattered and courted, while Herder was weighed down by bodily suffering, by the pressure, not perhaps exactly of poverty, but at least of very straightened means, by the uncertainty of the future, by the separation from a being he adored. It is scarcely fair to accuse him of "loving only the abstract in men and things." (1) His devoted attachment to her who afterwards became his wife, an attachment unweakened by time, absence or change of position, his tender affection for his children to which all his actions, all his letters bear witness, his love for his mother, his unceasing friendship for Claudius, Jacobi, Lavater, nay for Goethe himself (2) go far to defend him from such a charge. Let us compare the career of these two men. On the one side Herder poor, dependent on his own exertions, yet so soon as prudence permitted, at the very moment when his brightening

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(1) *Life of Goethe* by Lewis. Vol. 1st. p. 37.

(2) See Schiller's letter to Körner: "Goethe he loves with passion, etc."

fortunes might have assured him a more suitable alliance, wedding a portionless girl—giving up all the enjoyments of life, welcoming all its trials, to provide for the wants of a numerous family; <sup>(1)</sup> on the other—Goethe, breaking one after the other the most solemn engagements, sacrificing the peace and happiness of the innocent girls, whose hearts he had taken such pains to win rather than renounce one luxury, than run the risk of committing an infidelity to his genius." It is not here the place to inquire whether the ties of domestic affection, the endearments of a domestic circle might not have lent that genius precisely the qualities in which it is deficient, depth and passion; but whatever the defects of Herder's temper, however great his inferiority in mental powers to his more gifted countryman, in the nobler qualities of heart and soul he in our humble opinion, decidedly excelled him. Herder does not appear to have foreseen the greatness of his youthful visitor; but he declares that nothing could exceed his kindness and good humour.

As soon as he had recovered from the effects of his long suffering, he prepared for his return to Riga, when he received a proposal which completely changed the current of his destiny. The Count William of Bückeberg, long one of his warmest admirers, was desirous of securing his services as chaplain. Herder hesitated some time ere he could induce himself to resign his cherished pro-

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(1) Lebensbild von Herder, von seinem Sohn.

ject of establishing an Institution for Education; but the advantages presented by the offer overcame all objections; and in 1771 he set off for Bückeburg.

William Ernest, one of the innumerable princes among whom Germany was then divided, had been educated in England. Being a younger son, he proposed entering the British service, when the death of his elder brother recalled him to Germany. The change was any thing but welcome, for he had acquired the tastes and habits of an Englishman, and everything he beheld at his father's court displeased and shocked him. The old count dying some six years afterwards, he hastened to put into execution the schemes of innovation he had long planned. Every thing was turned topsy-turvy; the good and the bad destroyed by the same reckless hand. Count William's darling project was to make his little state a military power; but money was wanting. To obtain it, the young ruler pulled down the palaces, sold the costly furniture, increased the taxes, already far too heavy, and devoted all his time and thoughts to forming and drilling his troops. Agriculture was neglected; the country was becoming poorer and poorer, when the Count was invited by the English government to take the command of the regiment sent to the aid of Spain, in the war she had just declared against Portugal. When, after the lapse of several years, the young General returned to his native land, he was an altered man. Experience had not been thrown away upon him; he had seen and learned much, and applied himself seriously to the

task of rendering his people happy. <sup>(1)</sup>His character, however, naturally cold and reserved, harmonised ill with that of Herder. "My situation", writes the latter in August 1762, "continues unaltered; we are distant, reserved and evidently but little fitted for each other. The Count is a great prince, too great for his land; a philosopher whose philosophy bears me down. And even if he were not, there is nothing for me to do here. I am a pastor without a flock, a school-director without schools, a consistorial-councillor without a consistory. I have indeed one consolation in the friendship of the Countess, an angel of goodness". <sup>(2)</sup>

This eulogium was not unmerited. Maria of Bückeburg was equally lovely in mind and person. "Her face and glance resembled those of Raphael's madonnas", writes Mad<sup>me</sup> Herder, "a lofty forehead on which were stamped innocence and reflexion, the softest, purest blue eyes beaming with almost unearthly brilliancy, yet full of goodness and humility, lent an unspeakable charm to her countenance". <sup>(3)</sup> She soon appreciated the virtues and talents of Herder, and a friendship sprang up between them which ended only with her life.

Herder, nevertheless, felt sad and lonely. His sole consolation consisted in the letters of his beloved, and in the hope of soon making her his own. "The destiny of a virtuous woman and of a clergyman", he writes in 1772, "is, I often think, the best and noblest

(1) *Erinnerungen von Herder* p. 284.

(2) *Briefwechsel von Herder mit seiner Braut, von April 1771 bis April 1773.* p. 323.

(3) *Erinnerungen von Herder.*

in the world, and with good children, it must be a very Paradise on earth. But even without, although the idea is, I own, unspeakably painful to me, it must still be heavenly, because it is useful. It unites two beings who, if separate, might sink beneath the toil and burden of life, but who, together, strengthen and support each other".<sup>(1)</sup>

At length, on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of May 1763 he was wedded to her whom he so sincerely loved and who was henceforth the guardian angel of his existence. He brought his bride to Bückeburg where she was most warmly received by the Countess, who sad and lonely—her only child had just been torn from her by death—clung with sisterly tenderness to one who sympathised with her griefs and understood her generous nature. "I hope my dearest", she writes, "that you will accompany your Herder to the concert this evening. I will no longer sadden you with my complaints. Forgive and forget the outbreak of my anguish; you shall not suffer with me".

"The three years and a half we spent at Bückeburg, says Mad<sup>me</sup> Herder, "were the happiest of our lives". Yet Herder was not satisfied. In fact, for a man of his varied attainments, his vast ambition, such a life was almost unendurable. The Count, disappointed in his hopes of an heir, grew every day more silent and morose. The health of the gentle Countess had compelled her to seek for awhile in foreign travel some alleviation to her sufferings. With her, vanished the only charm of Bückeburg, and it

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(1) Briefwechsel mit seiner Braut. August 1772.



was with delight that in 1766 Herder accepted the invitation of the Duchess Dowager Amelia to join the circle of illustrious men she had assembled around her, and fix his abode at Weimar as chaplain and superintendant of all the schools lately established there<sup>(1)</sup>. Herder's reception was warm and cordial. His sermons, more distinguished for moral purity and lofty eloquence than for strict doctrine, attracted unusual attention.

"I come from Herder", writes Schiller to his friend Körner.—"If you have seen his picture at Graff, you can represent him perfectly to yourself; only his countenance is not sufficiently stern. He has pleased me much; his conversation is full of vigour, intellect and fire; but all his sensations consist in love and hate. Goethe he loves with passion, a sort of adoration. I must be quite unknown to him, for he asked me if I were married. He treated me like a person of whom he had seen nothing but who possessed the reputation of being somebody. Herder is amazingly polite. One feels one's self at ease in his presence. I think I pleased him, for he expressed several times the hope that he should see me again. Goethe, he confessed, had acted powerfully on his mental cultivation. He lives very retired as well as his wife, whom I did not see. To the club he does not go, as there they play, eat or smoke, which does not please him. He complained much of the pressure of affairs and that little time remained for composition. Among the literary men of Weimar, Wieland, he said, was

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(1) *Erinnerungen aus dem Leben von Herder.*

the only one who could live according to his taste, and devote himself to his pen. Herder hates Kant as you know. He thinks little of authors in general and least of all of dramatic writers, from ignorance, as he himself confesses, of this species of genius. He has read nothing of mine yet, and will probably be more just towards me than others have been". Last Sunday, I heard him preach for the first time. The subject was the unjust steward, which he treated with great judgement and delicacy. The delivery was as simple as the language. It is not to be denied that he is conscious of his own merits. The certainty of universal consideration gives him firmness and sets him at his ease. It was less an address than a reasonable conversation, a theme drawn from practical philosophy applied to the daily details of social life, precepts one could express quite as well in a mosque as in a Christian church. Herder's sermon pleased me better than any I ever heard". (1)

The schools the Duchess had established were pretty numerous, and Herder probably was the busiest person in that idle little court; yet he still found time for literary pursuits, for his "Ideas towards a Philosophical History of Mankind", his "Letters on the progress of Humanity" and his "Spirit of Hebrew Poetry", the finest of his works. Many portions indeed are eloquent even to sublimity; it was in the criticism of the grand and beautiful that Herder most excelled. Into this he threw his whole soul; for here he had only beauties to point out and in the

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(1) Schiller's Briefe an Körner. August 12th.

appreciation of these his spirit revelled. "Never", says the gifted authoress of "*de l'Allemagne*", "has the genius of the prophet-people been more admirably rendered. Their wandering life, their manners, their thoughts, their habitual images are indicated by Herder with astonishing sagacity." (1)

From his domestic cares and enjoyments, from literary and religious avocations, Herder was summoned by the proposal of the Prince-Primate Dahlberg, to accompany him as chaplain to Italy. He hesitated awhile. He had never been parted, even for a day, from his wife and children; and no delight, however great, could compensate in his eyes for the separation. But Mad<sup>me</sup> Herder, with her usual self-sacrificing love, urged his acceptance of an offer which afforded him an opportunity of visiting the land he had so long and vainly pined to behold. She believed it would stimulate his genius, revive his courage, restore his health somewhat injured by close application and incessant thought. Herder yielded, and in the beginning of August 1788 bade adieu to Weimar. Circumstances, not very clearly indicated, separated the friends soon after their arrival at Romè; but the Grand Duchess Amelia, who was then residing in that city, proposed Herder's joining her. Some extracts from his own letters may not be uninteresting.

Erfurt.

"Beloved wife and children, the first station is happily passed. Welmar has brought me the sad intelligence that you were yet weeping. Do not so,

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(1) *De l'Allemagne*. chap. XXX.

my love! be calm, cheerful and patient. God will help us, and I shall see you, my dearest wife and beloved children, once again in health and happiness."

Bamberg.

"What torments me in your letter is the false incomprehensible idea which you will not abandon, earnestly as I have entreated you, as to our mutual relation. I declare before God, you are my highest earthly blessing, a thousand times more than I deserve. Everything that is really good in me I owe to you alone. Whatever annoyances have befallen us, are the fault of destiny or perhaps, to speak more truly, my own. I have too little reason and too many peculiarities. To-day is the 24<sup>th</sup> of August, the day of our betrothal in heart and soul, when I brought you my first letter. I love you now, a thousand times better than when all trembling I laid it in your hand. Oh! believe it, thou deeply tried heroic soul! Thou hast done all for me; cared for me and sacrificed thyself in a thousand ways. How can I requite thee! Care for thyself and thy children, spare thy health. I am convinced that we shall begin a new bridal existence better and happier than the old one"

The beauties of art and nature, now first unveiled to him, seemed to open to Herder a new existence. "In Italy," he says, "one can do nothing; one can neither read nor think; one can only see. Rome is so great, so rich! Here are the works of three thousand years to seek and to find! One feels as though in an abyss, in which one can get no further. The threads which entwine Rome with the history of all other nations are so numerous, and the means of disentang-

ling them are here so difficult to discover, that it is better to let them fall from one's hands and only keep the skein between one's teeth."

Among the many friendships which increased the charm of his Italian existence and consoled him in some measure for his separation from his loved ones at home, none was so warm as that he contracted for the gifted and unfortunate Angelica Kauffman. At the moment Herder first made her acquaintance, Angelica was about thirty-seven years of age; but if her youthful bloom had somewhat faded, the loss was more than compensated by the exquisite charm which breathed in every look and word. We need not dwell on her sad history, on her precocious and varied talents, her skill and success as an artist, her visit to England, the honours which there awaited her and the fatal marriage which ensued. We blush to remember that it was an Englishman, of rank and birth who, to revenge himself for her refusal to become his mistress, hired a villain from the dregs of society, but not more worthless than himself, to assume the character of a nobleman and inveigle the too confiding girl into a marriage which blighted all her earthly happiness. It is some consolation to reflect, that the instrument of the crime at least, had not British blood in his veins. A divorce pronounced by the court of Rome on the discovery of the fraud, enabled Angelica to marry again; but she long shrunk with horror from the idea. When she at last yielded to the intreaties of her father who feeling his own end at hand, trembled at the thought of leaving his child alone and unprotected, it was on his colleague

the painter Zucchi, a man advanced in life, calm, mild and unpretending, that she fixed her choice. With him she returned to Italy, and rejecting the most splendid offers from the King of Naples settled at Rome where she won general esteem and admiration.<sup>(1)</sup> "Angelica", wrote Herder to his wife, "is a tender virgin-soul like a Madonna or a dove, a truly heavenly muse, full of grace, modesty and goodness. She has a real friendship for me. The hours I pass here are beyond comparison the happiest I have enjoyed in Rome. They are but few however; for she is excessively diligent and I do not venture to disturb her in her occupations. She begs to be most kindly remembered to you, but with such modest timidity, as though she were greeting a superior being. The impression she has made on me will do me good for the rest of my life."

In January 1789 Herder accompanied the Grand Duchess to Naples. "Oh", he exclaims, "if you and the children were only with me! Here are health, peace and life! Now I begin to understand how the ancient Greeks must have felt. If I had but you in Naples! The very air, even the Sirocco and the storm are so delightful, that one forgets every thing and desires to do nothing, but breathe and see! Here it is impossible for a cloud to settle on the brow. One gives them all to the winds. If I were not already so old and had not one with whom my heart and soul are entwined, I could wish to be born again here."

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<sup>(1)</sup> Frauenbilder, aus der Götze-Schiller Periode von Arnold Schönbach. 1856.

The effect of the climate of Rome, however, to which ere long Herder returned, was unfavourable both to his health and spirits. His only consolation was in the society of Angelica. "She deserves her name", he writes to his wife, "so far removed from all vanity and falsehood! She knows nothing of it herself, and yet with all her angelic modesty she is perhaps the most highly gifted woman in Europe." "She is a true pearl of innocence and friendship," he continues. "A little while ago I read her one of your letters which spoke of her. She burst into tears and was so moved that for some time she could not recover herself. Lately she said, she wished she could die near us, since her fate denied her living with us. She insists that she must absolutely know you. No doubt all this must be softened down a little. But I feel convinced that we have in her a treasure of friendship for the rest of our lives."

That these high-flown phrases should not have excited Mad<sup>me</sup> Herder's jealousy is the best tribute of praise that can be awarded to either wife, or husband. A few days after writing the above, Herder quitted Rome with the Duchess. They visited Florence, Venice &c., and returned-once more to Weimar in 1789.

When the first joy of reunion was over, Herder could not repress an occasional sigh for the bright skies, the glorious monuments of antiquity and art he had left behind. Here indeed lay the weak side of his nature. Like Lessing, though from very different causes, he was seldom contented. Wherever he was, except perhaps at Naples, he fancied he should be better

elsewhere. His health, which suffered greatly from the cold blasts of the north, may in some degree excuse this incessant desire for change. Ere we utterly condemn him, we should try and realize his position. True, he was surrounded by loving faces. He enjoyed the society of Goethe, Wieland and Schiller, the favour of the Grand Duke, the friendship of the Duchess. But his aspirations rose far above the narrow sphere to which he was confined. He had visited Paris, he had dwelt, for a brief time indeed, in that centre of literary and political activity, and to him the little town of Weimar with its good-tempered but somewhat stupid inhabitants, "a village with a court", as Schiller somewhere calls it, the silence of its streets unbroken save by the occasional rolling of a court carriage, its monotony, its tittle-tattle, was almost a prison. We know how unwillingly Goethe returned thither, how often even the self-sacrificing Schiller longed to quit it. Yet we cannot deny that a certain restless irritability was inherent in Herder's nature, that it increased with increasing years and alienated many of his warmest friends, many of those he most sincerely loved. Still his attachment to the Duke outweighed every other feeling and induced him to decline an invitation to Göttingen though accompanied with the most advantageous terms.

To divert his thoughts he turned anew to literary labours. Master of almost every modern tongue, he had long conceived the idea of rendering their national songs into his native language. As early as 1772 he had translated some Scotch ballads, and he



now completed a collection published under the title of "Lays of the People", in which he has reproduced, with rare felicity and success, that which is of all things the most difficult to reproduce, the peculiarity, the simplicity, the homely tone of popular poetry. He had penetrated into the full meaning of each individual author, into the spirit of the age in which he wrote, of the nation to which he belonged. He was not of one those exclusive spirits who confine their admiration to one peculiar class of excellence. After dwelling with ecstasy on the glorious productions of a Homer, a Sophocles, a Dante, a Milton or a Camoens, he turned with scarcely less delight to the humble songs of the Moguls or the Tartars. His versions are full of truth and spirit, transfusions rather than mere copies.

The "Cid", a free version or rather imitation of the celebrated Spanish Romancero which appeared in 1801, was the last of Herder's compositions. As a translation it is faulty. A celebrated critic <sup>(1)</sup> has pointed out more than one scene in which the spirit of the original, with its mingled rudeness and chivalrous simplicity, has been very imperfectly rendered; but as a poem it displays powers of a high order.

Herder's health had long been failing. The violent attacks levelled against him by the adherents of Kant and Fichte, more especially by those of the latter, imbibed his decline. We will not presume to enter into a question so momentous, so intricate as that of German critical philosophy, its truth or falsehood, defended

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(1) Villemain, *histoire de la littérature du moyen âge*.

as it has been by a master-hand.<sup>(1)</sup> But we would simply urge those who maintain its religious tendencies to cast a glance on Protestant Germany at the present moment. They will find, not only scepticism but infidelity spread among all classes, except perhaps in some parts of Prussia, to a lamentable degree; and when they recal the words by which Fichte inaugurated one of his courses of lectures—those words which called forth Herder's just indignation, "in five years the Christian faith will have ceased to exist; reason will be our only religion", they may perhaps hesitate ere desiring to introduce into our own land a system, of which its author himself predicted such a result.

While thoroughly detesting both, Herder distinguished between the doctrines of Kant and those of Fichte. The former, he acknowledged, might be worth studying if the author would but condescend to clothe them in language comprehensible to human understandings. "I will force Kant to confess that his philosophy is misunderstood", he exclaimed; "It is like fermented food; fools mistake the ferment for the dough itself. It is wrong of Kant who knows better, to leave men in this error, to sacrifice truth to vanity in order to found a school. The conduct of these philosophers towards me", he added, "is the most convincing proof of the demoralizing results of their system".<sup>(2)</sup>

From undoubted evidence, indeed, it would appear that its effects on the rising generation were far from

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(1) Carlyle's, "State of German literature. Critical and miscellaneous Essays. Vol. 1st.

(2) *Erinnerungen aus dem Leben von Herder.* p. 226—29.

desirable. The disciples exaggerated the lessons of their masters. Every thing hitherto regarded as holy—parental, filial or conjugal love—were declared mere sensual passions. The ordinary virtues of life were deemed too common-place, too vulgar, by these young apostles of a would-be loftier creed, who in the pursuit of fancied perfection bade fair to forget their duties, alike to God and Man. <sup>(1)</sup>

But the hour was fast approaching when Herder was to be released from every earthly care. He grew daily weaker and weaker till he could no longer leave his room. Two months, did the struggle last between his strong and healthy constitution and the disease which consumed him. "Ah"! he would sometimes say, "if a new and great idea would suggest itself which could seize on and delight my soul, I should at once recover. I do not understand my malady; my mind is perfectly itself; it is the body only that is ill". At length on the 18<sup>th</sup> of December 1893 he expired almost imperceptibly, without a sigh or a struggle. <sup>(2)</sup>

Despite the morbid sensitiveness and irritability, which at times obscured his noble nature, few have been more deservedly beloved or more lamented than Herder. Adored by his wife and children, his last days were soothed by their devoted cares. He was buried amid testimonies of universal affection and respect. "I will speak but a few words", said the preacher in his funeral discourse, "on the

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(1) *Geschichte der neuen Philosophie*. Leipzig 1842.

(2) *Döring's Leben von Herder*.

lofty sentiment of truth, the stainless integrity of the departed. Calmly and resolutely he followed the path of duty, regardless whither it might lead. He detested all flattery, all meanness, all deceit. Those only whose souls were animated with pure zeal for the good and true, could hope for his esteem or affection. Equally removed from indifference and bigotry, his religion was pure, humble and fervent. He detested the zeal which destroys, without giving itself the trouble to reflect that it is far easier to tear down than to build up."

Herder has been reproached with having undertaken too much, with having written upon subjects too various instead of concentrating his strength on one. But it is perhaps only the variety of his knowledge which has led to this conclusion. True in the art of combination and arrangement, he, like most of his countrymen, is sometimes deficient. We cannot quite agree with Mad<sup>me</sup> de Stael, that this is only "the noble negligence of genius impatient to march to new ideas" or that "a book well written is quite a modern invention".<sup>(1)</sup> We venture to think that the treatises of Cicero alone will refute the assertion. But whatever the defects of Herder's productions they are far outweighed by their merits. Through all we trace the influence of a pure, enthusiastic generous spirit, the love of his Creator and of his brother men. He was inspired by something nobler than the thirst for fame; by the sincere and constant desire to promote the best, the highest interests of humanity.

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(1) De l'Allemagne. p. Chap. XXX.

Of Herder's original metrical productions we have not spoken. Strange to say he is never so little a poet as in his verses. The necessity of confining himself strictly within the limits of rhythm seems to have cramped, nay destroyed his genius. "If however", says Richter, "he was not a poet, as he often declared, he was something better; he was himself a poem, a Greek or Indian Epic, formed by the purest of Gods. How shall I explain it? In that noble soul as in a poem, every thing was mingled, and the good, the true and the beautiful were inseparably blended. Greece was to him, the dearest among all lands; and however much his cosmopolitan taste may have praised and acknowledged every merit, he still clung, especially in old age, like a much travelled Ulysses to his Grecian home. Poetry was to him not the mere horizon of life; like a bright and glowing rainbow it spanned his whole existence. Few men were ever so truly learned as he on a great scale; he united the boldest freedom of system on God and nature with the truest and most fervent belief &c." (1)

Within two years of Herder's death his fond and faithful wife followed him to the tomb. She had herself predicted that she should not long survive him. (2) Caroline Herder was no ordinary woman. Her biography of her husband is not indeed a very favourable specimen of her literary talent. Its faults of arrangement, the confusion of details render it frequently almost unreadable; but

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(1) *Vorlesung der Aesthetik*. 3r Theil.

(2) *Erinnerungen aus dem Leben von Herder*. p. 332.

her letters are clear and graceful, displaying both natural intellect and mental cultivation. Goethe entertained a high opinion of her talents,<sup>(1)</sup> and Schiller, though he considered her somewhat proud and haughty esteemed and admired her <sup>(2)</sup>. She sleeps beside the husband of her youth, him whom she so truly and devotedly loved.

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(1) Goethe's Briefe an Herder.

(2) Briefe an Körner.

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## CHAPTER V.

### SCHUBART.

BRIEF NOTICE OF THE STATE OF GERMANY IN THE MIDDLE OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.—THE GERMAN NOBILITY.—COURTS AND PEOPLE.—SCHUBART.—HIS BIRTH, YOUTH AND MANHOOD.—HIS DEPLORABLE TENDENCIES.—IS THROWN INTO PRISON FOR DEBT.—REPENTANCE.—RELEASE.—IS APPOINTED ORGANIST AT GIESSLINGEN.—MARRIES.—RESTLESS SPIRIT.—IS APPOINTED ORGANIST AT LUDWIGSBURG.—EXTRAVAGANCE.—DEBTS.—HIS WIFE IS FORCED TO LEAVE HIM.—TRIES HIS FORTUNE IN BAVARIA.—IS WELL RECEIVED.—HIS FORMER FOLLIES COME TO LIGHT.—IS OBLIGED TO FLY.—SETS UP A NEWSPAPER AT AUGSBURG.—SUCCEEDS.—ATTACKS THE JESUITS.—IS THROWN INTO PRISON.—EXPELLED FROM AUGSBURG.—TAKES REFUGE AT ULM.—PARTIAL REFORMATION.—HIS WIFE AND CHILDREN RETURN TO HIM.—DOMESTIC HAPPINESS.—RECKLESS TEMPER.—ENMITY OF THE GOVERNMENT.—PLOT LAID AGAINST HIM.—THROWN INTO A DUNGEON.—HIS AUTOBIOGRAPHY.—SKETCH OF THE LIFE OF THE DUKE OF WÜRTENBERG.—HIS EXTRAVAGANCE, DESPOTISM AND VICES.—CONTINUATION OF SCHUBART'S "AUTOBIOGRAPHY".—POEMS.—DEEP SUFFERINGS.—ALLEVIATION OF HIS CAPTIVITY.—RELEASE.—ILLNESS.—DEATH.—REVIEW OF HIS WORKS.

THE names of those poets whose biographies we have hitherto sketched are well known to fame; that of the gifted and unfortunate man whose

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history we are about to record, has scarcely penetrated beyond the limits of his native land. There, indeed, his works were, for a while, popular to an almost unexampled degree. "There was a time", says Vilmar, "and it extended pretty far into the present century, when every schoolboy knew Schubart's "Paricide" by heart; still more generally admired was the "Prince's grave".<sup>(1)</sup> That time is past; but many of his lays have taken firm hold on the popular mind and are still heard in the workshop and the cottage in Württemberg. Schubart's life is replete with interest; not only from the trials and sufferings by which it was marked, but from the light it throws on the condition of Germany in the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

Time, luxury, the progress of civilization, the diffusion of knowledge had brought about great changes for good and for evil. Feudal pomp and pride had disappeared. The haughty barons who had once negotiated on equal terms with their sovereigns, nay often dictated their own conditions, were now reduced to the level of ordinary subjects. The peasants, indeed, had not greatly benefited by the humiliation of the Lords of the soil. The nobles had still their courts of justice, "Patrimonialgerichte", where, of their own authority, they could fine, scourge and even put to death their tenants for killing game, cutting down wood or offering any opposition to their will.<sup>(2)</sup> In Austria, it is true, Joseph the Second had done away

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(1) Vilmar, *Geschichte der deutschen Literatur*, p. 633, 5th Ausgabe.

(2) *Geschichte des Adels*, p. 200.



with many of these oppressive rights; but in all the inferior states, the nobility continued to enjoy privileges which pressed heavily on the lower classes, and of which they were deprived only in the revolution of 1848. The nobly born alone were eligible for civil or military posts of any importance; they alone could hope for favour or distinction. So far therefore, their position had not suffered any important change; but with respect to their sovereigns it was completely altered. Every reigning prince had established a standing army, against whose numbers and discipline all resistance would have been unavailing. Each year the German governments became more powerful, and with their strength their despotism likewise increased, while the sterner virtues for which their ancestors had been famed, rapidly disappeared before the fatal example of French manners and morals, imported from the magnificent but licentious courts of Louis the Fourteenth and his successors. The middle classes, indeed, were preserved from the contagion by the strict line of demarcation which then, and long afterwards, separated the noble and the citizen; but in all the smaller courts reigned a degree of profligacy rarely surpassed. That of Dresden especially was notorious, alike for luxury and licentiousness. We need only refer our readers to the "*Mémoires de la Margravine de Bayreuth*" and so many others of the time, for the truth of these assertions. <sup>(1)</sup>

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<sup>(1)</sup> See *Mémoires de Casanova*, 1814, &c

Next to Saxony, the court of Würtemberg enjoyed an unenviable preeminence in splendid vice, to which was added the most unbounded tyranny. True it possessed a constitution; but this constitution existed only in name. Seldom indeed did its rulers deign to consult the states, and never did they hesitate to gratify their passions or their desires at the expence of their people's dearest interests. In the year 1713, when famine desolated the whole province, when every grain of corn was of inestimable value, the reigning Duke, Eberhard Ludwig, forced the peasants to sow their fields with tobacco, for the sake of the revenue the government derived from it, a revenue expended on the most shameful pleasures. <sup>(1)</sup>—It was under the reign of his cousin Carl Eugene, that the subject of this biography endured the cruel sufferings which, far more than his writings, have handed down his name to posterity; for he has been remembered and honoured as a martyr, when as a poet he would probably have been forgotten. Yet we would not depreciate his verses, many of which are superior in power and pathos to productions far more celebrated.

Schubart was born in 1739 at Obersentheim, in Suabia, of humble but respectable parentage. Even in childhood, he was noticed for his passionate love of music, a love which accompanied him through life, and formed the consolation of many a sad and lonely hour. In 1745 he was sent to the university where, to use his own ex-

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(1) *Beſſer's Geſchichte des Hofes von Würtemberg.* — *Menzel's Geſchichte von Deutschland.* Chaptr. 585. p. 849.

pressions, "he loved, fought and studied by turns." The two first-named occupations evidently absorbed his attention, greatly to the prejudice of the last. His finances, as may be supposed, were never in a very flourishing condition, and his utter neglect of all prudential considerations soon reduced him to the utmost straits. He incurred debts which of course he was unable to pay, and was thrown into prison by his creditors without even a bed to lie on. But far from sinking beneath the weight of misfortune, his spirits seemed to rise in buoyancy, in proportion as his circumstances declined. With nothing but a little straw for a couch, and bread and water to live on, he amused himself by the composition of verses, not always, unhappily, of the purest description. A severe illness, however, the result of want and suffering, at once sobered and saddened him. On recovering, he wrote to his parents (who had hitherto either been ignorant of his position, or—indignant at his extravagance had refused to assist him) entreating their aid and forgiveness. This was granted. His debts were discharged, and he returned home with the promise and possibly the sincere intention of amendment. So deep indeed was the impression his imprisonment, or rather the illness which attended it, had left on his mind, that he abandoned for the moment all his former pursuits and devoted the greater part of his time to the study of the scriptures. The change however was too sudden to be lasting. With the recollection of his sufferings his good intentions disappeared, and in a few months he was the same as ever. Music continued his favourite pursuit, and he

undoubtedly possessed many of the qualifications most essential both in a composer and a performer, an exquisite ear, a true sense of harmony, a brilliant touch and great sweetness of expression. Had he devoted himself to this art, he would probably have attained first-rate excellence; but his wayward nature never allowed of his adhering long to the same pursuit. Every now and then, music was abandoned for some new occupation, though it is but fair to acknowledge that he always returned to it with redoubled zest. Meanwhile, his parents urging him to adopt some more settled way of life he attempted to obtain a prebend, and for this purpose composed a poem addressed to the Prince of — who had many in his gift. In this hope he was disappointed; but his musical talents, procured him the post of organist at Geisslingen, whither he repaired accordingly. Geisslingen is situated in one of the loveliest spots in the world, embosomed in mountains and diversified by wood and glen. The inhabitants were simple, honest and industrious. The pleasing manners and agreeable exterior of Schubart soon won their good will. For awhile this regular and peaceful mode of existence exercised a salutary influence on his mind. He devoted himself sedulously to the duties of his new office, while his leisure hours were occupied in reading, study and healthful exercise.

It was during this period, perhaps the happiest of his life, that he made the acquaintance of the daughter of the tax-gatherer of the village, a simple gentle unassuming maiden, who soon afterwards became his wife.

All now seemed well; but the calm was not of long duration. Schubart began to grow weary of so monotonous an existence. Though now a father, his home and fire-side had already lost their charms, and he resolved to leave Geisslingen, be the result what it might. His musical reputation came once more to his aid. He obtained a post similar to that he had already filled at Ludwigsburg, the summer residence of the Duke of Würtemberg. Here he was well received and at once introduced into the best society. This very circumstance which seemed to open such bright prospects to his view, only conduced to his ruin. It led him into habits of extravagance, to which he was naturally but too much addicted. His humble salary of seven hundred florins, or rather less than sixty pounds a year, was soon dissipated. Every day his debts grew heavier, and, to drown the sense of his folly, he plunged deeper and deeper into profligacy equally fatal to his health, reputation and domestic happiness. "Prudence", he says in his autobiography, from which we draw these details, "was a virtue of which I had no conception. I confounded it with cunning. One day I drove in the carriage of a courtier, the next I sat at the table of a cobbler. Wine and women were the Scylla and Charybdis on which I was wrecked."<sup>(1)</sup>

His wife who had long endured his neglect and dissoluteness without a murmur, who had done her best by tenderness and affection to recal him to a

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<sup>1)</sup> Schubart's Selbstbiographie oder Leben und Gesinnungen. 1. Theil.

sense of duty, sank into deep melancholy, and her father insisted on her returning with her children to the shelter of the paternal roof. Schubart who, despite his reckless course of life, sincerely loved his family, was deeply affected at this separation; but conscience-stricken, he offered no opposition. Fortune, however, once more smiled upon him. The Elector Palatine who had heard of his skill as a musician and was himself a proficient in that art, sent for him to Heilbronn, and received him with the utmost kindness. As usual his own imprudence brought about his ruin. One day while conversing with his Highness, he was unlucky enough to speak in disparaging terms of the Academy of Mannheim which his royal patron had just founded, and of which he was not a little proud. Kind and amiable as was the Palatine, this was too much for his philosophy, as poor Schubart soon discovered to his cost. Once more, he found himself on the world, without a sous in his pocket or a roof to shelter him. He would have been badly off indeed, but for the goodness of one of his noble patrons, the Count von Schonette, who gave him an apartment in his own castle, and supplied all his wants. After a time, Schubart ashamed of longer trespassing on the liberality of his benefactor, resolved to depart and try his fortune in Bavaria. The Count, who in his heart was not perhaps very sorry to get rid of a guest, for whom he could entertain but little esteem, did not seek to detain him; but generously provided him with funds for the journey, and a hundred florins for his wife and children. Schubart accordingly set out for Munich.

On the road, he met the Bavarian Ambassador with whom he was already slightly acquainted. Ignorant of his antecedents, and pleased with his manners and conversation, the diplomatist promised him his aid in obtaining some suitable employment. He kept his word. Not only did he admit him into his own intimacy, but introduced him to some of the first society in the capital of Bavaria. Schubart now seemed on the high-road to fortune, when unluckily for him one of his patrons visited Würtemberg. Here he accidentally learnt some particulars respecting his protégé's previous career, which—exaggerated probably in the narration—so disgusted him, that he not only withdrew his own favour from the luckless scapegrace, but induced all his other friends to do the same. Nothing was now left but to quit Munich as quickly as possible, and Schubart set off for Augsburg, where he resolved on setting up a news-paper. At first the undertaking met with little success. Gradually, however, the undeniable talent with which it was conducted, the boldness and novelty of the opinions attracted attention. Its popularity increased daily, till at length it became widely circulated and generally read. Nor was this his only means of obtaining a livelihood; he taught music, gave concerts, public lectures, and recited Klopstock's "Messiah" to thousands of delighted auditors. Unfortunately, in one of his articles, he concluded with a paragraph to the effect that—"Like the German who had visited London, he only wished to take a hatful of freedom away with him." These words excited the indignation of the Burgomaster, who rising up in the

senate, declared "there was a vagabond amongst them, who wanted a hatful of English liberty; but that he would take good care he should not have a thimbleful"; and concluded by demanding the suppression of the obnoxious journal.

It was granted so far at least as Augsburg was concerned. At Ulm, the publication was still carried on. It would have been better perhaps for Schubart had it been altogether silenced. Enraged by the tyranny of which he considered himself the victim, his language became every day more violent. He ventured to attack the priesthood, above all the Jesuits. This body, though fallen from its high estate, still retained no inconsiderable influence in Bavaria, and Schubart's praises of Ganganelli, the great suppressor of the order, roused their hatred to the utmost pitch. According to our hero's own account, his life was no longer in safety. One evening, as he was sitting with some friends improvising on the piano, the house was suddenly surrounded by soldiers, and he was arrested and conveyed to prison. His Protestant friends, however, succeeded in obtaining his release, though not without considerable difficulty, and only on condition of his leaving Augsburg without delay. 'I inquired my crime', he tells us, 'but the sole reply was, 'our reasons suffice; ask no more.' With a heavy heart, I left this city where I had met with so much kindness, and sought refuge at Ulm." <sup>(1)</sup>

On his way thither, Schubart stopped at the village of Grünberg, where on entering an Inn to take some

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<sup>(1)</sup> Selbstbiographie. Vol. 1st. p. 250.



refreshment, he found himself in the presence of a number of priests assembled round a table with his last work before them, that work in which he attacked the Jesuits with a violence and probably an injustice, certainly calculated to call forth their indignation, though it fails to justify the measures they adopted for revenge. The following is his own account of the scene: 'Now', exclaimed one of them, 'we have caught the rascal; we will tear out his tongue and burn the heretic alive; then let the dog bite if he can!' One only, the most enlightened, said something in my favour, and reproached his companions with their unchristian sentiments, while the host stood by with open mouth swallowing every word. I, however, did not lose my presence of mind, and abused myself more than they did." (1)

On arriving at Ulm, Schubart repaired to the house of a friend who had been his god-father and who now promised his aid; such indeed was the charm of his prepossessing address, impassioned eloquence and rare musical genius over all with whom he came in contact that, however severely they might condemn his errors, they found it difficult to refuse both pardon and pity. At this moment he received intelligence of the death of his aged father who, ever sickly, had sunk beneath the weight of years and sorrows. Schubart's conscience long dormant, but never completely dead, told him but too plainly that his own conduct had probably hastened the catastrophe, and the last words of the venerable man, "Oh God!

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(1) *Selfbiographie*, vol. 1st., p. 254.

do not desert my Christian; recall him to thyself, if not through joy, through sorrow" filled the erring son with repentance and remorse. Once more did he resolve to abandon his dissipated habits, and as the first step towards reformation, hastened to Geisslingen where his wife resided under the protection of her father, and entreated her return to the conjugal roof. His finances indeed were far from flourishing; but they would enable him to support his family in comfort, if not in luxury. He found his wife ill in mind and body. Her gentle and affectionate heart still clung, despite all his errors, to the husband of her youth, to the father of her children. Her emotion at beholding him once more was almost too much for her enfeebled frame. "She started up as she saw me, and extending her arms, sank pale as a corpse on my bosom. 'Here you have your wanderer once again' I exclaimed. 'Ah!' she replied, in the tenderest tone of reproach, 'it is well', and she wept. 'Will you accompany me', I said? 'I am at Ulm, and all I have is your's. 'Yes', she replied, 'and death only shall again part us.' She sent for my children. Oh! father they cried, and clung fondly round me." (1)

Deeply moved by this forgiving tenderness, Schubart really entered on a new course of existence. His domestic life at Ulm presents a pleasing contrast to his former dissipated career. "I was happy", he says, "with my faithful wife whom I fondly loved and my children at my side." Under the influence of this purer existence his poetical

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(2) Selbstbiographie, p. 259.

talents began to develope themselves, and he composed some of his most popular poems.

But the reckless temper which had so often brought him to the brink of ruin, was destined this time to plunge himself and family into the very depths of wretchedness. In his journal, to which the persecutions levelled against him served only to lend increased popularity, he continued his strictures on the despotism and profligacy of the German courts, strictures which from their truth, even more than their severity, excited the implacable hatred of the tyrants against whom they were aimed. In addition to this, the attacks he persisted in directing against the priesthood in general, Protestant and Catholic, rendered him an object of mingled fear and hatred both to the government and the sacerdotal body, while his utter want of self-restraint afforded his enemies but too many opportunities for his destruction. The following verses written about this period, full of enthusiastic love of country and liberty, and glowing with the hatred of despotism, were not calculated to appease his foes.

Look down, Father, on this world below,  
On the human race, their grief, their care.  
Oh! thou knowest how full it is of woe,  
How much cause is here for deep despair!

Christians who in heart and soul are thine,  
Yet their faith who dare not, cannot own!  
Wise men who must bow at folly's shrine  
And must wander friendless and alone!

Virtuous souls, doomed to behold the stream  
Of vice and folly hold its mad career!

For a royal monster reigns supreme,  
Deaf to every prayer and every tear.

. . . . .  
Patriots who with sad and burning breasts,  
Look upon the once triumphant oak!  
For they see with anguish ill suppressed,  
Virtue, freedom, perish, 'neath the yoke.

. . . . .  
Guard our Emperor, if his life resemble  
His Redeemer's, 'neath thy holy wings;  
But before thy thunder let him tremble  
And remember thou'rt the judge of Kings.

. . . . .  
When the woods, the rocks, the banquet-halls  
Echo back the sinner's scoffing word,  
Let this thunder from the temple walls,  
"An unfailing refuge is our Lord"!

. . . . .  
Guide the wild and ardent fire of youth  
For the righteous cause; and if the soul  
Of genius serve not virtue, honour, truth,  
Let it perish ere it reach the goal!

Oh! support the weary, bowing under  
Life's stern burden, resolute and mute;  
Strike the tyrant with thy deadliest thunder;  
Who would rob him of his labour's fruit!

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Give the needy food, the sufferer health;  
Give the poor, my pitying tears will flow,  
Give him something of the rich man's wealth,  
Soften thou the weary pilgrims woe.

Calmly then within the silent grave,  
When the hour arriveth, shall I rest;  
For, beloved land, while o'er thee wave  
Heaven's protecting wings, thou wilt be blest.

Regardless of the tempest gathering around him, Schubart continued his usual mode of life, either fancying himself strong enough to defy his persecutors, or of too little importance to call down their vengeance. In both suppositions he was mistaken; they waited only for a pretext, and that an accident soon afforded. The report having got abroad that the Empress Maria Theresa had died of a fit of apoplexy, Schubart, very innocently, published the intelligence in his journal. The Austrian Chargé d'affaires, knowing probably that the writer was obnoxious to the court of Würtemberg, accused him of malice-prepense in circulating what he chose to term "an insolent libel", and demanded his punishment. The government only too glad to seize the pretext, lent themselves to the absurd charge. To seize him at Ulm, where he was generally popular, might have been dangerous; it was necessary to remove him, and an expedient was not wanting. A certain General Ried, whom Schubart had mortally offended by declining to perform at his house on a piano very much out of tune, offered his aid in the affair. Schubart, it seems, had not been completely free from misgivings; he had even received anonymous letters, bidding him be on his guard; but with his usual recklessness, he had soon forgotten them, and even laughed at the warnings. When therefore he was informed that a stranger of rank desired to see him on business of importance,

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and requested him to meet him at some little distance from his own residence, he fell unsuspectingly into the snare. The day arrived. "I arose and dressed myself; my children nestled around me; my wife trembled; the sledge that was to bear me away stood at the door. "Farewell, my wife"; she gave me her hand and turned very pale; "cannot this stranger come to you", she said? These were the last words I heard from those dear lips; I ran down stairs, mounted the sledge; my son cried, "Father, come back"; my heart beat, and my eyes filled with tears. The sledge bore me away from all I loved, wife, children and friends, without my having time to clasp them once more in my arms, to thank them for all their love and pity, to weep over them the burning tears of an eternal farewell. Ah, I have wept them often enough since then in my prison. God has seen and counted them. He has heard the prayers I raised for thee and for thy children, thou dear German Ulm. He will reward thee for all thou hast done for me, for my wife and children. Ah! to have a wife and children, a wife so beloved, children so innocent, and no longer to be able to breathe the sweet words, husband and father! Judge of the world! hast thou in the cup of sorrows a drop more bitter than this." (1)

Schubart and his conductor flew over the snow-covered fields, and in a few hours arrived at their place of destination. The poet was conducted to an empty apartment; his companion had left him; he remained alone and was already becoming somewhat

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(1) Schubart's *Selbstbiographie*.

uneasy at so extraordinary a reception, when the door suddenly opened, a company of soldiers entered, and the officer advancing announced his arrest, in the name of the Duke. Thunder-struck at so unexpected a sentence, Schubart for an instant doubted the reality of what he heard; but he was too soon convinced of the terrible truth. His presence of mind did not desert him; "I trust the Duke will not condemn me unheard, or leave me to rot in prison", was his only observation as, with a breaking heart, but tranquil brow, he descended the stairs, surrounded by the escort.

"Permission" he tells us "had been granted me to write to my wife; but my hand was paralysed. Food was offered me; but I could not touch it. I entered the carriage, a gaping populace around me; the major seated himself beside me. My wife! My children! That thought alone filled my soul. They are beggared", I said to the major, "I have scarcely left them money enough for two days; what will be their feelings when they learn that their husband and father is a prisoner! The major promised to recommend my family to the Duke; he kept his word".<sup>(1)</sup>

The following day, the unhappy Schubart was carried to the fortress of Hohenasperg, where he was destined to spend so many weary years. "My whole frame trembled when Asperg rose before me, veiled in the grey morning-mist. What awaits me here, I thought, as the carriage paused at the gate of the fortress. The Duke himself was there, and from the balcony

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(1) Schubart's Selbstbiographie. 2r Theil. p. 7.

pointed out the den in which I was to be confined. The commander Rieger came to me; I entreated his compassion. I was led to a dungeon next to the very room, where the Duke and his Duchess were looking down upon the scene below. The major, who had left me, returned with the intelligence that my wife was to receive a pension of two hundred florins (or about seventeen pounds) a year, and my children to be educated at the expense of the state, at the Academy at Stuttgart. A mountain was lifted from my heart; the door closed behind me. I was alone. Alone in this dark, dreary, rocky den! I stood and gazed wildly around me. Here then, was I doomed to wear away my existence! I sat whole hours on my bed of straw, contemplating the desolate silent walls, the iron ring imbedded in the stone, to which, by the command of the Duke, I was to be chained, if I infringed in the slightest degree the prison rules. The first feeling of which I was conscious was amazement at the fulfilment of a dream I had had eight years ago. Then, when the stunning sensation produced by the shock was over, I sank into the deepest, the most hopeless melancholy. I already saw myself in fetters; I already heard them clank on my trembling arm. To me nothing was more horrible than the idea of chains! Those who daily brought me my bread and water, had the strictest orders not to address a word to me. Neither book, musical instrument, pen, ink nor paper was allowed me. I had neither wife, child, mother nor friends. All around was silent as the grave! Hurlled from every earthly enjoyment into this den of dumb despair, from the gayest society



into utter solitude, from freedom to fetters, with so fiery a soul, so excitable a fancy, so fervent a love of human nature, with such over-activity of mind—alone—without hope! Oh! my Heavenly Father! thee and thee alone have I to thank, that I did not utterly lose my senses, and thus render myself incapable of mourning my past sins and imploring thy mercy. It was not till after the lapse of some days that my over-burdened heart found vent in floods of tears. I dared at length to raise a sigh to God. But then the thought struck me like thunder—"for years thou hast never uttered a prayer; will he deign to listen to thee now, that thou wouldst fain raise thy trembling voice in the depths of agony?" 'I am God and not man', whispered a voice; and I sank upon my knees as though touched by the hand of the Almighty, and for the first time breathed a prayer broken by sobs and tears".

"Of all my sufferings, ennui was the most terrible. I numbered no longer the days, but the hours. Every one that passed was a rock lifted from my heart. I counted my steps, the beating of my pulse, the threads of the mattress that covered me. I repeated by heart every thing I knew in science, or literature; but this employment soon lost all interest. As I heard human beings, although I could not see them, my greatest delight was to listen to their voices, to count their footsteps. Amid these fearful tortures the visits of the governor were my only consolation. I felt that it was the express finger of God that had placed me under the control of this man and of no other. He himself had once been in a similar, nay a still

more terrible condition, and the description of his four years imprisonment, of his sufferings, of the wonderful manner in which the Almighty had disclosed himself to him and brought him to the knowledge of his word, was replete with instruction and consolation. His condition had been the most fearful that can be conceived. For four long years he had beheld no human face; his miserable fare was let down by means of a trap-door. He had neither table, chair, nor any other article of furniture, and his dungeon was never cleaned during the whole of that period. His beard and nails were allowed to grow, so that the terrible state to which he was reduced may be imagined. During the long winter-evenings he was left in utter darkness. He never heard the slightest intelligence of his family, and, with the exception of the Bible, had no book. And yet God so evidently aided him, that he was enabled to compose spiritual hymns and in his solitude he made himself master of such a treasure of the word of God, that I have scarcely known any man who had so completely imbibed it into his very soul. He refreshed me bodily, by good food, drink and medicine, and spiritually by remonstrances, alternately gentle and severe, and by books, which were of unspeakable comfort to me, though they rather melted my soul than calmed its tormenting doubts. 'You have suffered shipwreck', he said; 'one plank alone is left you; that one is religion'. I snatched at this plank eagerly as the drowning wretch struggling for safety amid the waste of waters".<sup>(1)</sup>

(1) Selbstbiographie. p. 9 to 67.

In the condition he here so vividly describes, Schubart dragged on twelve weary months. His mental sufferings were terrible. The past, the irrevocable past, was perpetually before his eyes. Opportunities wasted, talents squandered, all heaven's most precious gifts recklessly thrown away, or turned to vicious purposes, the peace and happiness of a loving wife and children blasted by his follies and dissipation, such were the recollections that thronged upon him with overwhelming force in the silence of that lonely dungeon, where no flattering tones, no clamorous applause drowned the still small voice of conscience, so often unheard amid the noise and bustle of the crowd."

But whatever Schubart's errors the Duke's conduct is not the less inexcusable. The unhappy man had committed no crime against the laws of his country or the person of his prince; he had been arrested on a miserable pretext, and condemned without the semblance of a trial! He was detested alike by the Duke and the courtiers; the former a bigoted and narrow-minded despot, accustomed to the exercise of irresponsible authority, probably looked on him as really a very dangerous man. He did not choose, perhaps he could not venture to put him to death outright; so he sent him to this dungeon as the readiest means of placing him in a condition in which he could not emit opinions prejudicial to his authority, and displeasing to his taste. Solitary confinement was then considered absolutely indispensable to the safe-keeping of a prisoner. Books and writing materials were forbidden; not probably with the express purpose of increasing the sufferings of the cap-

tive, but because their introduction might possibly present means of communication with a world beyond the prison walls, and thus offer facilities of escape. As to the tortures thus inflicted, they never even entered into computation. Humanity, in its present widely extended sense, would have been regarded as an absurd weakness. A criminal was contemplated with mingled fear and horror, as a wild beast, of whom it was necessary to rid society at any cost, and whose individual sufferings were not of the slightest importance. Once within his dungeon, he was utterly forgotten. Let those who are fond of lamenting the good old times, visit the dungeons of Hohenasperg, the Piombi of Venice—the fearful dens, beneath the feudal castles on the Rhine, where the wretched victims lingered out their existence; let them read the records, few and far between, which have been preserved of their agonies, and let them thank Heaven that their lot is cast in days when tyranny and cruelty, though they still exist, are the exception, not the rule, and the meanest and most guilty wretch is regarded as within the pale of humanity. A brief sketch of the man whose brutal despotism exercised so fatal an influence over Schubart's destiny may not be uninteresting.

Carl, Duke of Würtemberg, was born in 1738 and was scarcely eight years old when his father died. At the age of fifteen, he was conducted by his mother, the widowed Duchess, to the court of Frederick the Great, where he spent two years. His superior intelligence, his firmness of character, which had not then degenerated into obstinacy, attracted Frederick's

attention, and won his favour. By his good offices he was declared of age at sixteen, not a little to the annoyance of his vain and capricious mother. His haughty temper had so often come in collision with her own that she had learned to regard him almost with hatred, and had resolved to declare him illegitimate, in order to raise her second son to the ducal throne. Banished to a distant estate, where she was kept in honourable captivity, the Duchess died of grief and disappointed ambition at the age of forty-nine.

The unrelenting harshness evinced by Carl Eugene to the woman who, however faulty, was still his mother, was but the type of his whole character. At first, indeed, his conduct was only that of a wild thoughtless school-boy, suddenly emancipated from all restraint and invested with supreme authority. His follies, if not very dignified, were at least tolerably harmless. But with increasing years, his evil propensities developed themselves to a fearful degree. To the madcap freaks, to the self-will of youth, succeeded deliberate vice and cold-blooded tyranny, which too often rendered him deaf to the voice of humanity. Our limits will not allow of our enumerating the victims to his heartless despotism, strangely alternating with fits of generosity and condescension. After condemning an unoffending individual to linger out years in some loathsome dungeon, after apparently forgetting his very existence, he would suddenly recal him to mind, release him, and load him with favours, but without expressing a single regret for the past. Thus he dealt with Rieger, the commandant under

whose custody Schubart, as we have seen, was placed, with Moser, a celebrated writer of the period, and many others. He considered his subjects as his property, and thought himself no less fully entitled to do as he pleased with them, than a child with his play-things, or a Virginian planter with his slaves. That the victims of his caprices should question this authority, or complain of its exercise, never entered his imagination.

His extravagance was scarcely less fatal to his subjects than his tyranny. He forced them to lend him immense sums without offering any security, and raised the taxes to such a degree, as to reduce thousands to beggary. <sup>(1)</sup>

The sale of human flesh, which leaves so indelible a stain on the potentates of Germany, was carried on with vigour. In 1787 a thousand peasants were sold to the Dutch to be sent to the Cape of Good Hope. Few if any returned; in the year 1791 out of two hundred and twenty-six, one hundred and fifty-five of these unfortunates had died of grief and fatigue. <sup>(2)</sup>

The greater part of the sums, wrung from the blood and torture of his subjects, was devoted to the expenses of an army utterly out of proportion with the size and importance of his dominions; the rest to the maintenance of a court, which in splendour resembled that of a mighty sovereign, rather than of a petty German prince; and to that of the

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(1) *Beſſe, Geſchichte des Hofes Württemberg.* Vol. 1st. p. 10.

(2) *Beſſe, Geſchichte des Hofes Württemberg.* Vol. 1st. p. 29.

opera, one of his favourite hobbies, to gratify which no price seemed too high. The director was the celebrated Lommelli. *Le Diou de la danse*, Vestris, here displayed his wondrous art six months every year, for the comparatively moderate sum of twenty-five thousand francs, and enchanted the dance-loving inhabitants of Stuttgart, who in their rapture at all the wonders that delighted their eyes and ears, forgot, for the moment, the mis-government and tyranny which weighed so heavily upon them. Carl Eugene's wife, a princess of Beyreuth proud and haughty as himself, did nothing to soften her husband's character and, as the Duke's libertine propensities kept pace with his prodigality, it is not surprising that she should soon have insisted on a divorce. Into the details of his court for many succeeding years we will not attempt to enter. Suffice it to say that, on a small scale, it equalled that of Louis the 15<sup>th</sup>. From these depths of profligacy, however, he was reclaimed by an attachment comparatively pure and guiltless. In 1770 he became enamoured of Francisca Theresa, wife of Baron von - . In the eyes of Carl Eugene her marriage was of course no obstacle. At first she rejected his homage; but it was not for long. Lofty and pure indeed must have been the virtue that could withstand so corrupt an atmosphere. A divorce was obtained, and she was raised to the rank of Countess of Hohenstein. We are assured by Mad<sup>me</sup> von Oberkirch, who knew her in 1780 that "she possessed every quality of heart and mind; that she was devoted to the Duke and loved him disinterestedly and

truly".<sup>(1)</sup> Her influence over him was unbounded, and on the whole decidedly beneficial; yet it is singular that, not only did she never intercede for the unfortunate Schubart, but even stood beside her Lord to witness the incarceration of the wretched captive.

In 1788 the Duke was privately married to Francisca, and shortly afterwards he proclaimed her Duchess of Würtemberg. At the same time, he announced his firm intention of atoning for the past, by henceforth devoting himself to the good of his subjects; and, although his actions fell far short of his promises, still it must be acknowledged that a striking amendment did ensue. He built schools and public institutions and began to protect arts, science and agriculture. The army was reduced from seventeen to five thousand men, and the people, flattered by these concessions, forgot both past and present wrongs. One of Carl Eugene's favourite occupations in the latter years of his life, was visiting and inspecting the Carls-Schule which he had established in 1770, and to which the name of Schiller has given so much celebrity. He died in 1793 at the age of fifty-three.<sup>(2)</sup>

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(1) See "Mémoires de la Baronne d'Oberkirch Vol. 1st p. 349. According to the Baroness, Madame de Hohenstein though not yet married to the Duke, was regarded as his legitimate wife; at all events the Grand Duke of Russia and his Duchess condescended to dine with her at her superb country residence.

(2) Schöle's Geschichte von Würtemberg.



We must now return to Schubart who lay within his dungeon-walls, forgotten alike by the Duke and by the world. The compassionate kindness of the governor and, above all, the healing influence of religion in some degree softened his anguish; but there were moments when it almost overwhelmed him. "Often", he says, "I felt a longing for freedom so intense that I struck my clenched fists against the wall, as if to get a little air. The damp of my dungeon, where not a breath ever penetrated, oppressed my limbs with unspeakable weariness. Many a night I have passed without closing my eyes. The fearful demon, hypochondria, spread his dismal wings more and more around me. While praying and reading, or in sleepless nights, I beheld grinning gaping figures, with outstretched arms, or birds with long open beaks and bats' wings. Often it seemed as though I must go mad, and all those friends who knew me best feared this result. Every autumn indeed, the report spread that I lay a maniac in chains, and it is certain it was only through a wonder of the Almighty I escaped. I implored God with a thousand tears, my forehead pressed against my dungeon floor, to save me from a condition which rendered a return to hope and happiness impossible, and often at the very moment when my senses seemed about to desert me, I felt His saving hand, as by a miracle, restore them. But darkness lay upon my soul. The howling tempest, when it broke around the walls of my dungeon, was dearer to me than the sunbeams which streamed at times through the iron gratings. The absence of all social intercourse was the most terrible trial for one

so formed for the world as I was. I killed nothing living within my dungeon. The attempts of the spiders to seize their prey beguiled many a long weary hour. The glow-worm that crawled up my wall was a welcome companion. In winter I often lighted a fire at night that the flies, whose humming was music to my ears, might not die of cold. A world without living beings would in my opinion be only a hell to him who inhabited it. At first I made plans for romances, poems &c., and tried if I could not write with the snuffers. I succeeded tolerably well, and in this way I composed several sacred poems and others that well deserved to be printed. But this was soon observed and the point rubbed down so that I was deprived of my only resource. The poems I had completed were taken from me, and all have been lost." One day, it seems, Schubart was engaged in writing on the blank leaf of a book with a morsel of pencil of which some how or other he had contrived to become possessed. The commandant suddenly entered and perceiving his employment, broke into exclamations of indignation at what he regarded as a breach of discipline. He pressed the prisoner so closely that Schubart, partly terrified by his menaces, partly moved by the recollection of his many good offices, confessed where he had hidden his cherished papers, imploring that they might not be taken from him, but in vain. Innocent as were the contents, they highly displeased the governor who, with an excess of piety verging on fanaticism, regarded all studies save that of the word of God, as a mere waste of time under any circumstances, and

as an absolute crime, under those in which Schubart was placed. He not only carried off the poems, but threatened the unhappy prisoner with the chain, if he again found him employed in such "unholy worldly trash", as he called it.

Schubart, however, was not wholly overwhelmed; he now knew where to look for solace. True his newly awakened piety was not untinged by mysticism. But it is rare, even under the happiest auspices, that the transition from confirmed infidelity to deep and fervent piety is unaccompanied by some extravagance, the natural result of the intense mental conflict by which it is necessarily attended; how much more when the change is effected in the silence and solitude of a dungeon! The following little poem composed beneath the mingled influence of deep penitence and intense mental suffering is not without a certain charm.

SPRING. <sup>(1)</sup>

So he returns;  
To earth anew,  
Shakes from his locks  
The sparkling dew,  
In the golden cup of the thirsty flowers.  
The hills awake; the groves, the bowers,  
The loosened floods rush gladly along;  
The shady woods are full of song;  
The pious heart looks up to God,  
And dew-drops shine on the vernal sod.

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<sup>(1)</sup> We have been compelled to change the metre, that of the original being inadmissible in English poetry.

But oh! I shall not see thee!  
In hill and grove and bower,  
I shall not view the golden drops,  
That from thy tresses shower.  
I shall not hear the melodies  
Of thy soft glancing wing;  
Nor the sweet murmur of the breeze,  
That fans thy cheek, oh spring!

Forgive, forgive, great Lord of all,  
If, in my anguish deep,  
I hide my face within my hand  
And bow my head and weep!

True, I deserve not to inhale  
The spring-time's rich perfume,  
To breathe the fragrance of the gale,  
To watch the flow'rets bloom:  
To listen to the streamlet's song  
Hurrying its silvery course along.

And yet from nature's blooming face  
Did I not humbly raise!  
My thoughts to thee, oh! source of grace!  
In prayer and in praise?

Did I not on the flowery spray  
Shed tears, in that blithe hour,  
And kiss the sparkling dew away,  
From the first violet flower?

I praised thee when I paused to mark  
The grasshopper's gay note,  
And heard the warbling of the lark,  
Upon the zephyrs float.

How would my heart, with pleasure thrill,  
When in the evening shade  
I heard the nightingale's sweet trill,  
From some sequester'd glade.

How oft, my loved one by my side,  
Our prattlers round my knee,  
I've sat at morn or even-tide,  
Beneath some spreading tree.

I felt that thou indeed wert love,  
I saw thee every-where,  
In the wild flowers, the shady grove,  
And in the rose-bud fair!

I saw thee in the sparkling brooks,  
Where the trout played the while,  
In my sweet children's joyous looks,  
In my wife's gladsome smile.

Oh! at this thought, my heart grows cold,  
And all around is night;  
True I deserve not to behold  
Thy spring-time fair and bright.

True, I have sinned - 'twas for this  
Thou hast pronounced my doom,  
And hurl'd me from a home of bliss  
Into this dungeon's gloom.

I feel it to the very core;  
For all things fair and bright,  
Thou know'st made my full heart run o'er,  
With deep and pure delight.

Thus to be doomed to bear the brand  
Of an avenging God!  
Chastened, not by a father's hand,  
But by a judge's rod,  
Caged in this foul and loathsome den!  
Here doomed to live and die,  
Ne'er to behold the face of men,  
To meet one pitying eye!  
This is indeed an awful fate,  
And nature sinks beneath the weight.

Have mercy on me, Lord of grace!  
Oh! hear thy suppliant's call!  
Dispel the cloud that hides thy face,  
Have mercy, Lord of all!

Then shall I raise my drooping head  
And curse my chains no more,  
Nor the pale light the sunbeams shed  
Upon my dungeon floor;

Thy pardon won, beyond the tomb,  
Where I shall soon be laid,  
A brighter, better spring shall bloom,  
A spring, which n'er can fade.

Who can read these lines without the deepest sympathy for the unhappy writer? "I could no longer walk," he tells us, "when I arose to pace my dungeon-floor. I was obliged to lean against every corner to avoid falling. Had this lasted much longer, I could not have survived." Yet his fortitude and resignation did not entirely fail him, as is proved by the following lines impressed with a piety at once fervent and sincere:

The Lord is every where;—feel it, my soul!  
Feel it adoring—God is every where!  
In the bright world as in thy dungeon foul,  
In the fierce tempest, and the summer air.

On the high mountain—in the chasm riv'n  
Deep in the earth, in hill, and glen and dell.  
If I mount up to Heaven—thou art in Heaven,  
And thee I find, if I descend to Hell.—

Here, where in darkness and despair I languish,  
Here, in this lonesome den, this living tomb,  
Thou hear'st me praying, moaning in my anguish;  
I feel thy presence near me 'mid the gloom.

And when I die—in the grave's fearful night,  
Father of mercies! thou wilt be with me;  
And when I wake in realms of endless light  
I shall awake with thee!

At last, on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of February 1787, his condition was in a considerable degree ameliorated. "The commandant", he says, "suddenly entered my dungeon, and as he informed me, by the orders of the Duke led me to a dry and cheerful room, where I once more began to breathe freely. The mere sight of my beloved fellow-men—for from my window I could see the joyous gambols of children in the courtyard of the fortress—rejoiced my heart. The pitying eye that was sometimes lifted to the prison grate, strengthened me more than the best food or medicine could have done. Never did I feel my love for human nature and its unspeakable worth, so deeply."

With returning health and peace of mind, Schubart's mental powers began to recover from the apathy into which they had sunk. He was indeed still deprived of all writing materials; but the improvement in his fare, the comparative comfort of his present abode, above all, the letters he was permitted to receive from his wife and children, cheered his sinking heart. "My good commandant", he tells us, "often brought me food and wine with his own hands."

"On the 31<sup>st</sup> of July I was removed to a rather darker apartment; but I was now strong enough to endure all that might be inflicted on me."

In fact this change proved of the utmost advantage to the prisoner; for it procured him the blessing, so inestimable in his position, not indeed of a companion, but at least of a neighbour, with whom he found the means of holding occasional intercourse, and to whose good offices we are indebted for the journal from which our present biography is extracted. "In the next chamber", he says, "was Herr — whom the enmity of his brothers had confined here for nineteen years under the pretext of some youthful folly. I sometimes heard him play on the piano, read aloud or sing, and in sleepless nights raise his sighs towards Heaven. We contrived to converse with each other through the hole in the stove which we enjoyed in common, and I discovered in him a man of keen judgement, and the remains of varied knowledge. Through the hole above mentioned, I contrived likewise to dictate my journal. At night, when we felt most secure against interruption, I drew my stool towards the spot, my neighbour his



mattress." (1) This secret intercourse with one of his fellow-creatures, doomed like himself to wear away his existence in captivity, beguiled many a sad and weary hour. But Schubart, despite all his efforts, could not resist the fatal influence of prolonged confinement. His health, restored awhile by his removal from his damp and gloomy dungeon, sank again beneath the pressure of hope deferred. The occasional harshness of the commander whose temper, soured by early misfortune at times mastered his better nature, contributed to imbitter his condition. He became weaker and weaker, and at length believing his end at hand, he wrote with a nail upon a morsel of paper the following touching letter to his wife, and hid it beneath his mattress. "Sad presentiments and forebodings, and a body weakened by continual suffering presage the end of all my sorrows. Oh! thou my love, thou only chosen friend of my heart! thou who wilt remain alone—could I but tell thee, how dear thou art to me, how for the last two years, I struggle in my dungeon with the bitter consciousness that I am not worthy of thee! God has fearfully avenged thy tears, has brought home to me every sorrow which I have caused thee.--A thousand tears have I wept for thee, imploring thy pardon! The All-merciful Father has forgiven me, and thou, my angel, thou wilt also surely have mercy. What I can still do for thee, I do! In every prayer thou and thy beloved children kneel beside me; I lay my hand upon your heads and bless you. I know, God

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(1) Selbstbiographie. 2. Theil.

has heard my prayer; thou wilt live and know no want; thou wilt be the wise counsellor of our children, and they will give thee joy and consolation. Perhaps a more deserving friend than I may be thy guide to Heaven. I should have been so, and have not been. Be comforted; God has suffered his judgments to chasten my body that my soul may be saved. My children, oh my children! Lay thy hand instead of mine upon their foreheads, and consecrate them unto God. If the shame that their father died as a criminal in a dungeon should bow them to the earth, relate to them my sins and my sufferings. And now all my tears are wept; best, tenderest of wives, farewell!"

But Schubart was mistaken in believing that his earthly trials were about to end. Days, weeks and months passed by, and though so weak that he could scarcely raise his food to his lips, he still lived on. It would seem indeed as if suffering were the normal condition of humanity as if existence takes a deeper and firmer root in a soil watered by tears, than in one on which the sun of gladness perpetually shines. Gradually the indignation of the Grand Duke appears to have abated; for in the February of the year following Schubart obtained permission to attend public worship in the chapel of the fortress. What were his feelings when he found himself once again among his fellow-men! On the 3<sup>rd</sup> of the same month, he was removed to another chamber, and his neighbour placed beside him in the room adjoining. He was now suffered to receive his friends and shortly afterwards to perform on the organ, on Sundays in the

chapel; for the fame of his musical powers had reached even Hohenasperg. The same evening to his astonishment and delight, he was summoned to take a walk with the 'commander in the neighbouring woods. "It was", he says, "nearly three years since I had breathed the fresh air of Heaven, since I had beheld the beauties of creation; now I saw them once again after such long suffering, such hopeless anguish!—that fair world, in the sheen of the coming spring! I returned to my prison strengthened in mind and body, and thanked God for the mercies of that day."—After this he was frequently allowed the same indulgence. Among his visitors was one destined at no very distant period to become the day-star of the German horizon—Frederick Schiller. That he made no common impression on the mind of the captive is evident from the following passage in a letter to Gleim, written several years later; "except Schiller, I scarcely know a single German youth in whom the sacred spark of rare genius has risen like a flame upon the altar of God." (1)

Meanwhile Schubart's sufferings began to excite general sympathy.

Armbruck, a student at the Stuttgart academy and himself an enthusiastic lover of liberty, ventured to collect his poems with the intention of publishing them. This reached the ear of the prisoner who, fearing that his productions might appear in a mutilated or imperfect condition, presented a

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(1) Thus far extends the biography; why it was not continued, we are not informed.

petition to the Duke, that he might himself be allowed to superintend the publication. The request was granted; but as Schubart had no funds of his own he attempted to raise a subscription for the purpose. No sooner had this become generally known, than sums poured in on all sides; many, who had not courage to commit themselves by openly taking up his defence, rejoiced at the opportunity of tacitly evincing their horror of tyranny. The profits of the work, which were considerable, were devoted to the unfortunate wife and family. Unhappily, in this instance as in so many others, Schubart's want of prudence again nearly destroyed all his brightening prospects. Among the poems were several by no means calculated to win the favour of his oppressor, and of which, however admirable, common prudence demanded the suppression. The most conspicuous of these was the "Fürstengruft" or "Prince's Grave", which made such an impression on the public mind that it reached the ears of the Duke himself. He commanded one of his courtiers to read it aloud. He listened in silence, but with darkening brow until the line,

"There where for tyrant's souls",

when starting up he paced the floor for some minutes, without uttering a syllable. It is tolerably certain, however, that this incident contributed in no small degree to lengthen Schubart's captivity.

#### THE PRINCE'S GRAVE.

Yes there they lie, who were but yesterday,  
Dispensers of our doom!  
There they lie, lighted by the ghastly ray,  
Which breaks alone the gloom!

The mouldering coffins still are faintly gleaming  
 From the vault dark and wide.  
 How strangely the broad silver shields are beaming,  
 Last type of kinglŷ pride!

How fearful is the Echo which alone  
 Disturbs their quiet now;  
 No thunder ever spoke with louder tone  
 "Oh Man! how vain art thou".

Here lies the Prince who followed virtue's path,  
 Sent to delight mankind,  
 Beside the wretch, whom Heaven in its wrath  
 As his worst scourge designed.

Its transient power and pride for ever ended!  
 Here moulders many a brow  
 Upon whose nod, once, life or death depended.  
 Where is its splendour now?

Withered and shrunk, the hand that once so coldly  
 Condemned the wise and brave,  
 Who dared to plead their country's rights too boldly  
 Unto a living grave.

Do courtiers still their empty flattery proffer  
 To the now deafen'd ear?  
 Say do adoring crowds still humbly offer  
 Their trembling homage here?

Ye whose base hearts, by vice and pleasure sated,  
 Scoffed at religion's law,  
 Who treated men, like you by heaven created,  
 As food to fill your maw,

Ye! who with song and chace and tuneful numbers  
Deafened—at least awhile,  
That awful voice which breaks the sinner's slumbers  
Who scorned the sons of toil,

Who upon horses, hounds, and venal pleasure  
Your richest guerdons shed,  
While genius, wisdom, all that kings should treasure  
Were left to pine for bread!

. . . . .

Rouse them not with your lamentable moaning,  
Ye they have robbed of all,  
Banish the ravens lest their croak and crouching,  
Should make them burst their pall!

Curse them not, lest their bonds should burst asunder,  
Their slumbers will be fleet,  
Ere they are roused by Heaven's last fearful thunder  
Unto the judgement seat.

There, where for tyrants' souls death's angel keeping  
His watch, arrests their flight,  
And all their sins, in one vast mountain heaping,  
Hurls them to endless night.

But, ye good princes! who beloved and loving  
Were dear to every heart,  
Already are your blissful spirits roving  
In Eden's bowers apart.

. . . . .

Ye! who on earth all regal power possessing  
Cared for your people's weal,  
Your scale will sink beneath that people's blessing  
Whose woes ye sought to heal.

Time passed on, and Schubart began to despair of his liberation. His imprisonment however was rendered supportable by the permission granted him to write and publish at pleasure. In 1786 he composed a poem in honour of Frederick the Great, which appeared in the Augsburg Gazette. Its popularity was so great, as once more to awaken universal attention and sympathy for the writer and to induce the Duke of York, then at Hannover, to intercede in his behalf. Such powerful mediation could not be resisted, and Schubart was released without condition.

Once more he was free! after ten long years he was restored to the world, to his faithful wife, to his loving children, to all those friends who, despite his many errors, still clung to him with mingled pity and affection. The comparative mildness of the latter years of his captivity had restored his health of mind and body, and he resumed the direction of his journal with renewed vigour and success. In addition to this he completed the first canto of the "Wandering Jew", a work, according to his son, of no common merit. But he soon laid it aside and never resumed it.

A terrible accident disturbed his new-born happiness. He broke his arm, and was compelled to submit to an amputation, which he endured with the utmost fortitude. But the shock affected his health, and on the 10<sup>th</sup> of October 1791, death put an end to all his schemes, and stilled for ever that restless intellect, that warm though erring heart.

Schubart was of middle stature. In his youth he was pale and slight, but always strong, active and

an adept in all manly exercises. His eyes were remarkable for their brightness, and when moved by any strong emotion they seemed literally to flash fire. Nor did ten years of captivity extinguish their extraordinary brilliancy. His habits were careless in the extreme; he was fond of walking, and allowed neither wind nor weather to prevent his daily promenade. We may judge from this, how much he must have suffered during his long imprisonment. His musical powers were of the highest order. "He began", says his son, "calmly, and rather apathetically; but warming as he proceeded, became at length excited to such a degree as to forget himself and all around him, and play on for hours together, pouring forth strains of melody so exquisite as absolutely to entrance all who heard him. "Let him who does not know what genius is", said Vogel, "come and hear Schubart play a fugue on the organ or improvise on the piano. When complimented on this talent, he replied, "that is the spell with which I have acted most powerfully on mankind. When tranquil, I am only a common, every-day personage; but when this breath of Heaven descends upon me, I surpass myself, and produce things which remind my colder reason of the immortality of man. During this state of blissful exaltation a breath, warm as life, ascends from my heart; I feel so blest, that I would willingly die in one of these trances of ecstasy".<sup>(1)</sup>

In his "Character of Schubart", appended to his autobiography, his son strives to exculpate the poet's

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(1) Schubart's Character, von seinem Sohne. 1798.



memory from many of the charges to which he himself pleads guilty, ascribing his self-accusations to the workings of a morbidly excited fancy, tormented by solitude and by the books of mystic devotion with which alone he was permitted to beguile the weary hours. How far this suggestion of dutiful tenderness may be justified by facts, it is difficult to say. One thing is certain; despite all his faults and follies, Schubart had many and ardent friends, and his wife who so deeply suffered from his excesses, never ceased to adore him. His merits as a poet have been differently estimated by different critics. While by some he is treated with contempt, by others he is called "The finest lyrical writer of his day." <sup>(1)</sup> Scherr in his "Cultur und Sitte" speaks of him as the "celebrated lyrist", and the numerous editions through which his works have passed—the latest was of 1847—prove that they are still to a certain degree popular. In the highest qualifications of a poet, he is doubtless absolutely wanting. He has neither sustained elevation of thought nor strong creative powers; he is always unequal, sometimes coarse and repulsive; but his imagination is fervent and glowing, his verses so harmonious that the greater part have been set to music, his descriptions of nature true and beautiful, and in many of his lays, we meet with bursts of enthusiasm, with gushes of tenderness or pathos which touch the heart far more than laboured excellence of a higher order. We subjoin one or

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(1) See article in the "Conversations-Lexicon": Cultur und Sitte.

two which still are favourites in Germany, both in the saloon and the cottage.

### THE TROUT.

A little stream was dancing  
With murmur sweet and low;  
The merry trout were glancing  
Like arrows to and fro.

I stood all sweetly dreaming  
The sparkling brook beside,  
And watched them lightly gleaming  
Beneath the crystal tide.

Close by, an angler lying  
Beheld the finny prey,  
With keen impatience eyeing  
The merry trout at play.

I knew, so long the water  
Retained its crystal hue,  
They would escape the slaughter;  
But their foe knew it too.

Wearied with vain alluring  
The bait and line he shook,  
With subtle skill obscuring  
The surface of the brook.

Alas! the young intriguer  
Needed not long to wait;  
The trout deceived and eager  
Caught quickly at the bait.

Oh! ye who linger lightly  
Upon youth's golden shore,  
Read ye this lesson rightly,  
And shun what I deplore!

Ye maids avoid the slayer,  
Beware the fish's fate,  
Heed not the gay betrayer,  
Or ye may mourn too late.

## SUABIAN PEASANT'S SONG.

So charming as my Lizzy sweet  
Is no one in the world to me,  
From the head, to the tiny feet,  
She's fair and gentle, fresh and free;  
Her pretty cheeks are white and red,  
Her lips as sweet as gingerbread.

Her clustering locks are black as night,  
And soft as silk, they wave at will;  
Her eyes—they are as big and bright,  
As stars at night, when winds are still.

In all the hamlet I believe  
None is so active as my bride;  
She spins the live-long winter's eve;  
In spring she sows and digs beside;  
In summer, our Lisette makes hay;  
In Autumn—stows the fruit away.

And then her letters! that's a treasure!  
She wrote me one a month ago;  
The tears ran down my cheeks with pleasure.  
I never saw one written so.  
When she begins to read the paper,  
I scarcely dare to snuff the taper.

Then if you could but see her dancing;  
She moves with such a graceful ease;  
'Tis like a little streamlet glancing,  
In sunny glen 'mid dale and trees.  
And yet she dances, as you see,  
Right willingly with none but me.

Oh, dear and gentle Lizzie, longer  
This sad suspense, I cannot bear.  
Each day, my fears, alas! grow stronger.  
Oh! would the wedding-day were here!  
Trust me in all on Suabian land,  
Thou'lt find no truer heart nor hand.

### THE CAPTIVE'S SONG.

Composed in prison.

The captive lark, caught by the cruel snare,  
In gilded cage confined,  
Sits motionless in silent mute despair,  
Hopeless, but not resigned.

Roused for an instant by the morning rays,  
She half forgets her pain,  
And fain would pour, as once in happier days  
The soul-entrancing strain.

Already has she ope'd her beak to sing  
The joyous melody,  
And raised her head, her flight to heaven to wing,  
As erst when she was free.

'Twas but an instant—ah, she had forgot,  
The prison bars are strong—  
In vain—she sinks beneath her fearful lot.  
Where is the captive's song?

Against the cage's wires she beats her form,  
Then falls unto the ground;  
There, there she sits, as blasted by the storm,  
And utters not a sound.

Oh! fearful image! this too is my doom;  
I seek to fly, and sink back to my living tomb.

The nightingale, though captive, sad and lone,  
Still sings till life depart;  
But ah! her notes have lost their joyous tone;  
They breathe a broken heart.

The turtle-dove snared in unheeding hour,  
With plaints each heart will move;  
Are they the sounds with which in grove and bower  
She tells her tender love?

Ah, no! it is a sad despairing tale  
Which rings upon the ear like sounds of death and wail;  
An image of my woe—thus do I pour my strain,  
And weep and pray, alas! but weep and pray in vain!

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## CHAPTER VI.

### VOSS.

STATE OF GERMAN LITERATURE TOWARDS THE END OF THE 18<sup>th</sup> CENTURY.—THE HAINBUND.—VOSS'S CHILDHOOD.—STRAIGHTENED CIRCUMSTANCES.—HIS COLLEGE LIFE.—ACCEPTS THE POST OF TUTOR.—TRIALS AND SUFFERINGS.—GENEROUS AID FROM BOIE.—PROCEEDS TO GÖTTINGEN.—FRIENDSHIP WITH STOLBERG.—FIRST LOVE.—THE MUSEN-ALMANACH.—NARROW INCOME.—PRICES AT THAT PERIOD IN GERMANY.—MARRIAGE.—REMOVAL TO OTTERNDORF AS HEAD OF THE ACADEMY.—POEMS.—THE TRANSLATION OF THE "ODYSSEY".—DOMESTIC TRIALS.—TRANSLATION OF THE "ILIAD", THE "ÆNEID" &c.—VISIT TO HALBERSTADT.—VISIT TO WEIMAR.—INTRODUCTION TO WIELAND, HERDER, GOETHE AND SCHILLER.—RELIGIOUS DISCUSSION WITH STOLBERG.—FINAL BREACH.—THE "LOUISE".—"THE SIEBENZIGSTE GEBURTSTAG."—VISIT OF BAGGESEN.—DOMESTIC HAPPINESS.—ILLNESS.—DEATH.—REVIEW OF LIFE AND WORKS.

WHILE reading the life of Schubart, we are for an instant transported to the realms of romance. With Voss we return to those of ordinary life, its daily trials, its joys and sorrows. Ere commencing the sketch of his biography, however, we must pause to cast a brief glance on the state of German literature towards the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The works of Lessing and Herder had infused a new

spirit into the country. The apathy they had hitherto evinced in literary as well as political matters was exchanged for a restless activity, which carried them into the contrary extreme. Every youth capable of writing decent verses imagined himself a genius selected by Providence to open a new path in the literature of his native land. On the whole, however, the reaction was salutary, and one of its most important results was the "Hainbund".—"The Göttingen, or Hainbund", may be said to have been originated in 1770 by Boie, a man of considerable talents, in conjunction with Gotter, a dramatic author long since forgotten. Ardent in the cause of national poetry, they founded in 1770 the "Musen-Almanach", which served as their poetical organ, and summoned all the youth of Germany around their standard. The first who answered to the appeal were the well-known Hoelty, Müller, also no contemptible poet, Leisewitz, author of "Julius von Tarent", long one of the most favourite tragedies in Germany, and Matthias Claudius, whose simple but touching melodies enjoyed extraordinary popularity. Religion and fatherland, virtue and friendship were the objects to which they devoted their muse. Rejecting what they regarded as the cold and rigid rules of art, they selected nature as their model and as the ruling principle of their works. Klopstock, they regarded with a veneration verging on idolatry. Every Saturday they met at each other's houses and there read and criticised their own productions and those of men of more established fame. At times they would assemble in some romantic spot "under

the shade of lofty oaks, in the glimmering moonlight, by the side of murmuring streams or in grassy meads,"<sup>(1)</sup> and there give full vent to that passionate and somewhat exaggerated love of romance and nature, which form the principal characteristics of their poetry. Voss's letters, after he joined the "Bund", afford a more correct and more vivid idea of its peculiar organization and of the excentricities of its members, than we can derive from any other source. "What", he writes to Claudius, "shall we both become twenty years hence? "Shall we too aid in enhancing the fame of our beloved fatherland? What delight if we can one day embrace each other in the temple of fame which is likewise that of virtue? You should have been here on the 12<sup>th</sup> of September. The two Müllers, Hoelty, Hahn and I went in the evening to a village in the neighbourhood. The weather was most lovely, the moon full; we gave ourselves up completely to the enjoyments of nature, drank some milk in a peasant's cottage and then hastened to the open meadows. Here we found a little oak wood, and at the same moment it occurred to us all to swear the holy oath of friendship, under the shadow of these sacred trees. We crowned our hats with ivy, laid them beneath the spreading branches of the oaks, and clasping each other's hands, danced round the massive trunk. We called on the moon and stars to witness our union and swore eternal friendship. We pledged ourselves to repeat this ceremony in a

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(1) *Letter von Hög. von Dering.*



still more solemn manner on the first occasion. I was chosen by lot as the head of the "Bund." Imagine such a scene in our country, the young poets of the lake school, their hats crowned with ivy, dancing in mystic round by the light of the moon!

Soon after we find the young poets carousing together at a festival offered to one of their comrades on his quitting the university. "On either side of the table," writes Voss, "sat the children of the bards. Boie at the head leaning back in his arm-chair. Toasts were drunk, first Klopstock's. Boie stood up, took the glass and exclaimed 'Klopstock!' Every one followed his example, raised his glass, uttered the sacred name and, after a reverential silence, drank. Then were proposed other healths, but not so solemnly, Lessing, Ramler, Gleim, Gessner, Gerstenberg, &c.—Some one, Boie, I think, named Wieland. We sprang up with full glasses, and exclaimed, 'death to the destroyer of morality, death to Wieland!'"

In these words absurd and exaggerated as they are, may be traced that reaction which had already begun to wither the laurels of him who for so many years had reigned supreme, the delight and darling of his country-men.

In a subsequent letter Voss thus describes their Saturday reunions: "Every Saturday we meet at four o'clock. Klopstock's odes and Ramler's poems lie on the table, bound in octavo in black and gold. As soon as we are all assembled, some one reads an ode; we decide on its beauties and on the merits of the reader."

Many of Voss's letters at this period give characteristic sketches of the poets' Bund. "How happy should I be", he writes in 1771 to Boie, who had by this time left Göttingen, "if you were but among the society to which I owe so many pleasant hours! I must enumerate all its members to you: first Hoelty, a most picturesque poet; secondly Müller, cousin of Dr. Müller, and himself a bard."

He then proceeds to recapitulate many names long since forgotten. Its more celebrated members, the Stolbergs, Schlegels and Bürger did not join the "Bund" till some time later.—"We generally meet on Saturday at five o'clock", continues the writer, "the individual selected for the purpose of examining our productions takes them home with him and writes a criticism on them, which is read the following day. We have a book, superbly bound, intended to contain all the poems of our circle worthy to live. As yet nothing stands there, as the song we composed under the oak is to form the commencement."

Later in life, Voss's exaggerated admiration for Klopstock considerably abated. While rendering due justice to the merits of the poet, he would smile at the remembrance of the boyish enthusiasm which had exalted him to a God. "Klopstock's birthday," writes Voss, "we celebrated nobly. A long table was spread and adorned with flowers. At the head, stood an arm-chair on which were laid his collected works. Under the chair lay Wieland's 'Idris', torn in pieces which we used to light our pipes. Boie, who does not smoke, was compelled to stamp on the 'Idris.' Afterwards we drank Klopstock's health in sparkling

Rhine-wine, and then the memory of Luther, &c. We toasted freedom, hat on head, Germany, poetry and virtue, and you may imagine how at last we burnt Wieland's picture, and finished the entertainment." (1)

The writer of the above letters, Johann Heinrich Voss, was born the 20<sup>th</sup> January 1751, at the little village of Summersdorf, in Mecklenburg; but the greater part of his youth was passed at Penslin, whither his father, an honest farmer, removed when the boy was about eight years old. To eke out his scanty gains, the elder Voss acted as village attorney, and his natural acuteness enabled him to unravel with ease many an entangled law-suit and disputed claim. Voss, we are told, was early remarkable for his wonderful memory and for an ardent love of knowledge. He read at all hours, twilight, moonlight, firelight, to the lasting injury of his sight. The Bible was his delight, especially the touching history of Joseph and his Brethren, of Esther and of Ruth, and he could, with difficulty, be torn from these sacred studies to mingle in the sports of his companions. At eight years old he had already read Cornelius Nepos, Cæsar's Commentaries and Cicero's letters. At the age of fourteen he persuaded his father to send him to the college at New-Brandenburg, to pursue his studies. Though the old man's finances, never very ample, had been greatly diminished by the seven year's war, paternal love and pride overcame every other consideration, and in

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(1) *Voss' Briefe.* p. 89

the spring of 1766, Voss set out for his new destination.

He was well received, and at once admitted to the highest class. But notwithstanding the kindness shewn him by a few old friends of his family, his restricted means soon pressed heavily on the poor youth. To pay his college expences was as much as, with all his efforts, his father could achieve, and how to provide for food, fire, lodging and clothing, became a problem of no easy solution. Resolute and industrious, however, he did not yield to discouragement. He gave private lessons in Greek and Latin, in writing, reading and arithmetic, and contrived to gain sufficient to procure all he desired, the absolute necessities of existence. So long as he had clothes to cover, a roof to shelter him, and food enough, of the rudest quality, to support life and health, he was grateful and contented. His unwearied assiduity, amiable manners and intellectual superiority at length attracted the attention of some of the professors, who, learning the narrow state of his finances, declined accepting any remuneration for their instruction, and thus enabled him to devote a larger sum to those material wants which bow down the loftiest and most ethereal spirits. At length, he was offered the post of tutor in the family of a certain Herr von Erzen in the neighbourhood of Penslin. He gladly accepted the proposal and in the autumn of 1769 entered on his new duties, in the hope of gaining sufficient in the course of two or three years to pursue his academical career at the University of Halle. But he was not prepared for the humiliations that awaited him. The former

tutor had received a hundred and fifty-six florins, or thirteen pounds per annum—the ordinary stipend it would appear of a first-rate tutor in those days in Germany. But even this miserable salary was considered too much for his successor, and Voss was compelled to content himself with seventy florins, or about six pounds, and the promise of an additional ten florins the following year. Out of this, he had to pay for his own washing, his coffee and his wine! and was in fact placed on a par with the lowest servant of the establishment. (1) He was strictly forbidden to inflict the slightest corporeal punishment on his pupils and when, on one occasion, every other means having failed, he found himself compelled to resort to it, he received a reprimand so severe and so insulting as almost to exceed even his powers of endurance. If, as frequently occurred, the sons of neighbouring gentlemen were staying at the castle, he was expected to include them in his hours of instruction without any extra remuneration. The friendship of the excellent John Bruckner, who soon after Voss's entrance into the Count's family succeeded to the vacant curacy of—alone cheered and supported him in this dismal condition, and enabled him to bear up

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(1) The usual salary now paid to a tutor in a nobleman's or gentleman's family, with some few exceptions, is from twenty-two, to thirty-six pounds per annum. It must be remembered, however, that most of these tutors are "Candidaten" or theological students waiting for the prospect of a cure to take orders. The generality likewise are of low birth, the profession of a clergyman not being considered in Germany, we are sorry to say, as befitting the son of a noble house.

against the continual humiliations to which he was subjected. His prospects were indeed gloomy in the extreme. The greater part of the little money he had, by the strictest economy, contrived to lay by out of his miserable stipend, he regularly forwarded to his father. His few leisure hours he devoted to the study of Greek and occasionally to music, of which he was passionately fond. Sometimes he varied these occupations by attempting translations from Homer or Shakespeare. His unwearied industry indeed, his calm and cheerful submission amid so many trials present a spectacle at once touching and instructive.

A copy of the "Musenalmanach" which about this time was sent him by a friend, awoke the idea of turning his literary labours to account, and he determined to apply to Kästner, whom he believed the editor, for permission to insert some of them in his journal. In this letter he makes a touching allusion to his condition.

"Born of parents who possess but little save an upright and honourable name, I spent some years at the neighbouring classical school of Brandenburg. In my eighteenth year my teacher considered me fitted to proceed to the University; but my pecuniary circumstances rendered it impossible. Shortly afterward I was offered the post of private tutor in the family of Van Erzen which appeared to present the only prospect of future advancement. I have been here about two years. You will probably wonder that under these circumstances, which do not appear peculiarly favourable to the pursuit of the muses, I should venture to lay any of my poems before you.

I feel however, especially when I read Horace or Ramler, an irresistible desire to compose verses, and I must say they generally seem to me very tolerable, at least at first. But three weeks afterwards they appear in quite another light. I then discover innumerable faults; passages weak, obscure and incorrect, I begin to efface; but that only makes the matter worse. I have resolved therefore to constitute you my judge. If you think any of them worth a place in your Almanach, it will be a sign that I have, in some degree at least, fulfilled a few of the requisites of art. If, on the contrary, I see none of my works there, I shall regard it as an irrevocable decision against me, and I promise you, by the lyre of Apollo, never to perpetrate another ode in my whole life."

This modest appeal touched the kind-hearted man to whom it was addressed. His answer was accompanied by a few lines from Boie, announcing himself as the editor, and his favourable criticisms, his unfeigned kindness of tone inspired the young and timid author with mingled hope and gratitude.

"No human being", he writes to Boie in 1771, "can be more grateful to another than I am to Herr Kästner for the gift he has procured me of your friendship. I cannot describe the delight with which your letter filled me. How shall I thank you for your noble offer to aid me in my struggles? However much I am convinced that you are wanting neither in zeal nor in ability to assist me, I still shrink from imposing so great a burden on you. I must open you my whole heart. I had recently the

honour of becoming acquainted with Herr Superintendent Kessler of Gerstorf, on the occasion of an examination here. He generously offered to procure me the means of partial support at the university; as by giving lessons in French and music, I hope to be able to make up the rest, and advised me to give up my post as tutor. I regarded the proposal as the visible sign of Providence, and followed his counsel. My employers have procured another tutor, and I must leave next Easter. All I have been able to lay by, from my salary is sixty or eighty thalers (about twelve pounds); you know best how long this will last. I have reminded Herr K. by several letters of my existence; but hitherto received no answer. Confess, my best friend, does not the burden of my advancement in life terrify you? Or do you see any prospect for my success except in the interposition of the Almighty?"

A letter from Boie cheered his failing spirits. "Your last verses", he writes, "please me on the whole far better than the last. As to my wish to draw you hither, I have now hopes of succeeding. Herr Heine is also your patron, and we will seek to render your position at least endurable. Come then at Easter; you will find something for the moment, and time and circumstances will forward our good intentions. Thank God we have many here to whom zeal and genius are far from indifferent. I can venture to promise you one open house. If you could only obtain some little assistance from home at first, I should have no anxiety for the future; but even without that we will



find means to help you, or rather you will help yourself". (1)

Boie kept his word; he commenced by inserting some of Voss's fugitive poems, very mediocre performances, it must he owned, in his "Almanach", to the great delight of the author to whom he sent a copy of the volume. "I thank you from my heart for your charming present", writes Voss "you would laugh if you knew with what pleasure my muse saw herself in print. I have at last received a letter from the Superintendant. He regrets that he cannot aid a young man in whom he takes so lively an interest. In his promise to help me, he himself relied on the assistance of the late Professor — at Halle, and his sudden death having deprived him of his support, I must console myself with the uncertainty of all human things. Thus are the hopes, on which I rested so securely, dashed to the earth. What would become of me if Providence had not provided for me in another way?" Boie's answer was kind as ever, and at Easter 1771 Voss accordingly set off to Göttingen. His whole finances, as we have already mentioned, consisted in eighty thalers. But he possessed in Boie a friend no less ardent than sincere. He opened both his house and heart to the otherwise friendless student. The generous aid, indeed, which men of letters in Germany have almost invariably afforded to the young and struggling aspirants to literary fame, reflects great honour on the national character. Gleim, Bodmar, Kästner, Boie, none of

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(1) *Leben von Weß.* p. 97.

them wealthy, contrived, out of their narrow means, to assist and save many who, but for them, must have sunk beneath the weight of penury. "No father", writes Voss, "can care more for a son than Boie for me. Admission to college, a room free of expense, all this I enjoy through him. He himself pays for the room, and it costs him at least fifty-five thalers (eight pounds five shillings) a year. I must give you a description of this excellent man. Figure to yourself a little personage, stout yet well-proportioned, with a calm, agreeable and cheerful countenance. His glance announces wit and humour and when he speaks, his hearer is enchanted. All is enthusiasm and intellect. His taste is wonderfully correct, and at a single glance he discovers the most hidden beauties and the most concealed blemishes".

Soon after his arrival at Göttingen, Voss became acquainted with Hoelty, Bürger, the Stolbergs and all the members of the "Hainbund". His dislike to the vocation of clergyman to which his studies had hitherto been principally directed increased every day, and at last he resolved to abandon it altogether. "God, has certainly not intended me for a preacher", he wrote to Boie, "or he would have given me a more fluent tongue and greater inclination for my vocation. I have always acted as seemed right to my conscience. and I have found that I have acted well. I can surely obtain a modest appointment at Klosterberg, Berlin or else-where. If I am not overloaded with labour, I shall be able to serve God and my country in some other way; but I cannot and will not be a preacher".

His love for poetry meanwhile became every day more and more intense, and perhaps had not a little to do with his dislike for the avocations of a clergyman which, in those days in Germany, were supposed to be incompatible with literary pursuits. He determined to submit some of his verses to a judgement then deemed infallible, that of Klopstock, and to leave it to him to decide whether or not he had any chance of succeeding as a poet. "I know", he says in one of his letters, "I am not a Homer; but I hope to accomplish something". He seems indeed to have been pretty conscious that the "faculty divine", the true creative power was utterly wanting; but at the same time he believed that in many kinds of composition where vivid fancy and imagination were not required, he might attain eminence. Klopstock in a few stately but kind words encouraged his hopes, without, however, committing himself by any decided opinion. Meanwhile he was cheered by a correspondence of a very different character with a sister of his friend Boie, a young charming girl, full of poetical enthusiasm. This correspondence, at first on literary subjects, gradually assumed a warmer character and paved the way to a lasting attachment, to end only with life itself. "To-morrow", he writes on the 12<sup>th</sup> of December 1773, "your brother leaves me; he ought rather to have taken me with him to see you. Is it not so? We would have been right joyous together on your sister's wedding. Come hither, Ernestine, and whisper in my ear what I am, one day, to compose for your bridal. I have made another love-

song; not that I am really in love; but to practise myself in Ionic measure!" (1)

In the beginning of the year 1774, Voss determined to undertake a journey to Hamburg to become personally acquainted with the minstrel of the "Messiah", of whom, as we have already seen, he was one of the most fervent apostles. His zeal had been further stimulated by a letter which Boie, who had now returned to Göttingen, had brought with him from Klopstock to the "Bund". "The greatest poet", exclaims Voss in his correspondence, "the first German living, the most pious and excellent of men condescends to take a part in the bond of youth. He will unite Gerstenberg, Goethe, &c., all who are Germans in heart and soul, and with our collected strength we will seek to stem the tide of vice and slavery. God will aid us; for freedom and virtue are our watchwords". (2)

In March 1774, Voss was at length able to accomplish his long cherished project and offer up his devotion in person at the shrine of his literary idol. "Since Thursday", he writes to Boie, "I am here, and enjoy the most delightful hours I have ever spent in my whole life. I am every day and almost all day long with this excellent man. What can be more delightful than to have daily intercourse with such a being? At eleven o'clock I was introduced to Bach. (3) He played me some of his own composi-

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(1) *Leben von Voß, von Döring*, p. 92.

(2) *Leben von Voß, von Döring*, p. 104.

(3) Sebastian Bach was then Capellmeister at Hamburg.

tions. They sounded like magic. Bach likes to hear the praise of German music as a whole rather than of his own in particular. He has promised to play to me a whole evening. Yesterday, he took me with him to his choir where his "Resurrection" was performed. It was a glorious composition".

At the same time that Voss became acquainted with Klopstock, he was personally introduced to his hitherto unseen correspondent, Ernestine. He had accepted an invitation from Boie's father to spend a fortnight beneath his hospitable roof; but a severe illness had detained him for a far longer period, during which he received the most touching proofs of kindness from the whole family and particularly from Ernestine, who watched beside the pillow of her brother's friend with an interest inspired at once by sisterly affection and womanly pity. Voss recovered, and already half in love with Ernestine before he had ever seen her, it is not wonderful that his heart should have overflowed with passionate devotion to this fair and gentle being who had been to him a guardian angel. "How I wish you could see Ernestine", he writes to his friend Brückner, "you would find a subject for an idyl. How gracious was God in permitting my sickness to befall me here".

So soon as he was sufficiently recovered, Voss returned to Göttingen, where he resumed his studies with an assiduity to which the hope of one day of obtaining the hand of his beloved one, gave new zeal and vigour. The number of his private pupils increased daily, and his prospects for the future, though still precarious enough, gradually assumed

rather a more hopeful aspect. "I always imagined", he says in a letter to Ernestine, "when people said that love improved the heart, they lent it a tinge of romance it did not in reality possess. But now how natural, how inevitable does the union appear between love and virtue! Love indeed is the noblest boon that God has bestowed on man. Without it we must sink beneath the sorrow and suffering which so often are our lot in this world. With it we can defy destruction itself. But woe to him who outrages its holy laws! Not every earthly blessing can restore to him the peace of conscience he has for ever forfeited". "I asked myself", he continues a few lines further, "which I should choose, were I compelled to decide whether never more to behold friends, father-land, parents, sisters and to possess thee, or to enjoy all these in the lap of prosperity without thee. I trembled for the reply, for on either side existence itself was at stake; but my heart spoke aloud, man must leave father and mother, and I was proud that it thus replied; it was the voice of nature, it was the voice whose echo resounded in my heart; and then all was still, even as when the great sabbath of God was solemnized. Believe me our hearts were made for each other; if you can doubt it, think of the circumstances which led first to my correspondence and then to my personal acquaintance with you. I loved you, ere I beheld you; friendship alone could not have produced the sadness which filled my soul last winter. All my journey was love".

Ernestine returned this manly affection with equal warmth; but the precarious nature of his worldly

prospects rendered their union for the moment impossible; Voss's courage, however, did not desert him. "If I can contrive to remain here about two years longer", he writes to Bruckner, "I shall begin to study jurisprudence, so as to have more than one foundation for my future plans". The editorship of the "Musen-Almanach" had lately been confided to him on the departure of Boie, and, though not very lucrative, was still by no means unprofitable. He did not receive any fixed stipend, but was allowed a liberal per-centage on all the articles inserted, besides being paid extra for his own contributions.

At length arrived the moment when his term of study at Göttingen was completed. Whither was he to direct his steps? His friend Claudius who had lately settled in the village of Wandsbeck proposed to him to fix his residence there, at least for a while. "Whether I shall go to Wandsbeck or Hamburg", he writes, "is still undecided. Wandsbeck is more agreeable and cheaper; but we (namely himself and his friend Hoelty who had agreed for a time to reside with him) must have an establishment of our own; for Claudius cannot have us to board and lodge with him, and there is no one else who either can or will. An establishment of our own is a serious matter, and the profit of our Almanach will not as yet suffice to defray it."

It was in this uncertainty as to the future that the year 1756 opened on the young student. It found him poor indeed as before, but full of hope and confidence in an all-wise and merciful Creator. "I thought over all that has befallen me this last

year", he writes to Ernestine, "and blessed that God who has so mercifully and wonderfully guided me. I shed tears of gratitude and emotion, and formed new and fervent resolutions of patriotism and virtue. What can I do better than converse with thee, my all, after my God and my country. Through thee, and thee alone, has this stormy year, with all its tears and all its sorrows, been to me like a sabbath of the Lord". "The most exquisite ideal my imagination ever formed", he writes to Boie, "is only the shadow of those perfections I find in Ernestine. Do not fancy it is the lover who speaks; even in the vortex of passion there are calmer moments in which the judgement is at liberty to decide. But here judgement and feeling are the same, and rush with equal force into the ocean of love. Klopstock says of his Cidli: 'she would say with Portia it does not pain me;' Ernestine could do the same. How often has she shamed me by her firmness, her unshaken confidence in God. How often has she reminded me of death, and with the hope of her eternal love raised me to a better and purer existence. How carefully she concealed her tears, she who for my sake has lost her youthful bloom. Ah! if I should die ere we are indissolubly united, I shall at least have been the most blest of lovers".

On the 20<sup>th</sup> of April 1776 Voss quitted the university where he had spent so many anxious, yet happy hours, and proceeded to Wandsbeck which he had chosen as his resting-place for a time. "I am here", he writes to Bruckner, "and it pleases me inexpressibly. I have a lodging in a pretty little house with



a charming garden and three bowers, one close to a mill, where we drank tea this morning. My host the surgeon is a most agreeable man. Claudius sent us an invitation yesterday in wretched verses. We lay all day long in the wood or on the piece of grass in this garden listening to the nightingale and talking of you. Wandsbeck has many charms. The groves of the Baron Zimmerman are the most delicious I have ever seen. We have had innumerable gaieties this spring; but for me none was more delightful than an excursion on the Elbe to Neustadt, a village a mile beyond Altona where Klopstock, Henzler, &c. joined us. We spent the whole afternoon in a garden consisting of alleys and bowers of lime-trees in whose branches sang whole bands of nightingales, and where we could command a view of the Elbe covered with flowing sails as far as the eye could reach. In the evening we returned by water, and I have spent few evenings so delightfully. The moon shone brightly in the heavens, and shed a flood of radiance on the calm and silvery stream. The gales sighed faintly in the sails, as though they would have said 'Ah! that is fair!' and we sang all the lays we could think of, so that the shores re-echoed with our songs. I was in high spirits; for I had that very morning received a charming letter from Ernestine and a handkerchief which she generally wears with her white dress".

It must not, however, be supposed from this letter, that Voss wasted his time in empty amusements, however innocent. But his fading health imperiously demanded some relaxation from study. "If only", he writes to

Bruckner, "it does not end in consumption. If I am to die so early, I know not why God has led me in such marvellous ways to Ernestine. But there is another life, and those who love each other here will meet again. Meanwhile I cannot deny that the thought of death often depresses me, that I have sometimes entertained the silly wish that Ernestine did not love me". But this depression was only temporary, and did not interfere with his literary activity. "I am getting on pretty well with the Almanach" he writes to Ernestine, "I have had two thousand five hundred copies printed; to collect the subscriptions is very troublesome, as I am obliged to write to almost all the subscribers; but it is only the first year. It cannot go on so badly but it will enable me at least to live".

Conscious however of the precarious nature of such a subsistence, Voss looked about for something more certain if not more lucrative; the post of rector or head-master of the school in New-Brandenburg, where he had passed so many years of his youth, was at this time vacant, and thither accordingly he directed his steps in the hope of obtaining it. "I arrived quite unexpectedly at Bruckner's house," he writes to Ernestine. "I cannot describe my feelings in again beholding the spot where I had spent the saddest and most joyous period of my existence. How did my heart beat as I entered the well-known court-yard, and springing from the carriage rushed into the study of my friend. Bruckner was so amazed that, at the first moment, he did not recognize me. The same afternoon he sent to my parents, but did not

mention my arrival, merely requesting their presence; and after some hours they came breathless with anxiety. My mother fancied from this sudden summons that I must be dead, and entered with a trembling question if I yet lived. "Yes, he lives" replied Bruckner, "and I have a charming letter from him. I had hardly time to take refuge in the next room so that my mother might not see me too soon; but at length unable to repress my emotion, I sprung forward from behind the curtain. She fell on my neck and wept aloud, and could scarcely believe that it was really myself. My father has aged much in the last three years, but that day he was young again. It was a scene which can be imagined only, and not described. That night and the following day they remained with us. They spoke of our future union and of you as the guardian angel of their son. Saturday, I paid a visit to my former patron, Herr von Erzen, and was received with extreme courtesy. On Sunday I went to my native village to Penzlin, to my father's house. That was joy! To behold once more all the scenes of my childhood, the garden where I used to shake down the ripe plums from the tree, the meadow where I played ball, the pond where I sailed my little boat and overturned it in trying to catch a green frog. When I went into the street, all the neighbours came to their doors to bid me welcome.

I was urged to accept various invitations to dinner; but they were not offended when I confessed I would rather remain with my parents. You may judge that I am not disliked here, when I tell you how many subscribers I have obtained from this little town, not

larger than a large village. I must leave next Friday, as there is no one to attend to the "Almanach". Is it true that I may come to you next Michaelmas? Heavens! what an exquisite moment will that be. I pray daily to God for the preservation of your excellent father. Above all, do not give way to immoderate grief; remember you belong to others besides your father! to your mother, to your brothers, and above all to me: I pray, spare yourself for him whose life hangs on your's.

The post Voss came to solicit was, as is usually the case in Germany as well as elsewhere, disposed of in favour of a candidate enjoying more powerful patronage, and he returned to Wandsbeck saddened, but not discouraged. His disappointment did not prevent his imploring Ernestine to become his wife. Nor must we accuse him of undue temerity or of egotism in thus urging a union in which the happiness or misery of the woman he loved was involved. His "Musen-Almanach" brought him in about five hundred thalers or sixty pounds per annum, sufficient in Germany, in those days, to provide for all the necessaries and many of the comforts of life. Schiller, with a wife and young family declared he could live charmingly for a like sum,<sup>(1)</sup> and Jena where he resided was probably dearer than Wandsbeck. In our life of Wieland we have mentioned the low price of provisions at the period to which we allude. Every thing was in proportion. Thirty-three florins, or less than three pounds a year, was considered excellent

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(1) Briefe an Körner. Vol. 3d. p. 154.

remuneration for a thorough maid-servant even at Frankfort, Berlin or Vienna. A first-rate cook received perhaps fifty florins or four pounds three shillings, a man-servant about the same, a coachman rather more; while a maid of all work was glad to get twenty florins, not quite two pounds. In the country even less was given.<sup>(1)</sup> Articles of dress indeed were, as they still are, dear in proportion; but then how little was required. One best dress served, in the middle classes of society, for a whole life. Voss therefore might be justified in believing his income sufficient to provide for a woman with tastes and habits so simple as those of Ernestine. But the death of her father after a long and severe illness threatened to blight all his hopes. The widow could not be persuaded to consent to her daughter's becoming the wife of a man whose circumstances were at best precarious. Ernestine submitted, though with a sad heart, to the maternal decree, and consoled herself and her lover with the promise of unshaken fidelity and the hope of better days. She was not deceived. In 1777, Voss was appointed director of the "Almanach" with a settled income of six hundred thalers or seventy pounds

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<sup>(1)</sup> *Frankfurter Intelligenz-Blatt* 1773. — The ordinary wages at present in Frankfort, Berlin and most German towns except Vienna which is more expensive, are, a first-rate cook from one hundred to one hundred and twenty florins or ten pounds to ten pounds ten shillings per annum; a footman eight pounds, a coachman fourteen to sixteen; a chasseur ten to twelve; a nurse eight, and ordinary servants from five to six—still infinitely less than in most other countries, but more than double what they received eighty years ago.

so long as he should continue his editorial labours. —“You see,” he writes to his beloved, “no other journal can make head against mine. All the rising genius of the age will consider it an honour to write in it, and the taste for poetry will not die, for it has existed in all times and in all nations. I am convinced I shall not require any public office to live by; but I will seek for one as zealously as ever. Trust me, unhappy I will never make you. I love you better than even your mother herself, and this is no boyish passion. I am convinced I should labour with twice the assiduity and success if you were with me, and my friends would be twice as zealous in my behalf. And now at last what I should have said at first. Have the merchant, the banker, the farmer, the artist, the barrister, the doctor, alone the right to say: ‘Providence watches over us?’ be mine, and all will go well!”

On the lips of many men, such an assurance would have been very little worthy of credit. With Voss it was otherwise. His unflagging industry, his untiring perseverance, his iron will inspired in others the confidence he himself felt, and Mad<sup>me</sup> Boie consented to the long-desired union. In May 1778 Voss became the husband of her whom he so fondly loved, and bore her back to his humble home at Wandsbeck. As however the single chamber with which he had been contented during his bachelor-life was now insufficient, he hired a little garden-pavilion, and here they established themselves as well as the narrow space allowed. A clear and sparkling rill flowed at the foot of their abode, and the trees and flowers that

surrounded it gave it an air of cheerfulness and gaiety which, in the eyes of the young lovers, atoned for the absence of every thing but the most simple necessities. The evening after their arrival they visited Claudius, and many a happy evening did they spend in his garden, where a chosen few were wont to meet three or four times a week. Every description of luxury was banished as unsuited to the means of the entertainers; neither tea nor coffee were allowed; beer home-brewed, with bread and cheese and sometimes a little cold ham, or bacon, were the only refreshments permitted; but the mirth and good humour of the party required no stimulants; they were as happy as youth, health, friendship and congenial society could make them. One evening it was discovered that the provision of home-brewed beer was exhausted, and even that of cheese was waxing low. Some potatoes, however, and a little rice-soup remained from dinner, and with these Ernestine tells us, they were as happy as princes. "When Claudius came to spend the evening with us, he always bound his little daughter to his back; she was then laid in our bed till his return home." Campe and Lessing were frequently of the party, and joined in all their innocent gaiety.

We have lingered on this picture of rural enjoyment, because it proves, how possible it is to unite the highest literary culture with the simplest mode of existence, the most perfect refinement of mind and manners with the total absence of wealth or splendour.

Soon after his marriage Voss proceeded to Hamburg to present his young wife to Klopstock who re-

ceived her with marked kindness, and afterwards to New-Brandenburg and Penzlin, where he had the happiness of again embracing his friend Bruckner, and his parents. In a letter to his wife's mother he thus describes his visit. "I write to you on the very table on which as a boy I cut figures, little imagining one day I should have so sweet a wife by my side. We have diffused universal joy here; my parents, in particular, are delighted beyond measure. I have already visited every corner of the house, and Ernestine with me. It was touching to see my parents yesterday how they produced all their treasures to entertain us right grandly. I could not persuade my mother to sit down at table; she insisted on attending to everything herself, and only came from the kitchen now and then to look at us with all a mother's tenderest love beaming in every feature. My father declares he thanks God for nothing so much as for having granted him the happiness of living to see his daughter-in-law."

At the end of October Voss and his wife returned to Wandsbeck. Their pecuniary circumstances compelled them to put up with a wretched waggon without springs, but this and every other privation was lightened by love and hope. Nothing could be more simple than the arrangement of their little sitting-room. A table, a dozen straw-chairs, a foot-stool and curtains formed almost their whole furniture. But the pleasant situation, the clear brook and verdant foliage, the delight of daily and hourly intercourse, and, above all, their deep and pure affections shed a holy influence upon the scene, and turned it into a



paradise. Stimulated to fresh exertion by the possession of the treasure for which he had so long sighed Voss applied himself with redoubled ardour to his literary avocations, especially to his long-commenced translation of Homer from which he promised himself both fame and emolument. He also composed several original poems, the "Evening Walk" the "Penitent Damsel"; but though received with considerable applause at the time, they possess little that can recommend them to posterity. Klopstock was a frequent visitor at Wandsbeck, nor despite Voss's humble circumstances, did he want either acquaintances or friends. To the honour of the German character it must be allowed that mere wealth has never been regarded with the same reverential idolatry as in our own land.

Voss suffered neither domestic endearments nor social pleasures to interfere with the routine of his daily life. The morning and a great part of the afternoon were devoted to study and composition. Twilight was allotted for conversation.—After supper he resumed his pen and continued to write till ten or eleven at night.

The cultivation of his little garden offered a healthy and agreeable recreation, and great was his delight when summoned by Ernestine to gather the first peas planted by his own hands. The prospect of soon becoming a father, while it filled him with delight gave fresh stimulus to his exertions. "I am in the middle of the eleventh song of the *Odyssey*", he writes to Müller, "and hope by the Easter after next to have completed it." The sudden death of his beloved and venerable father interrupted his literary

avocations. The position in which his mother was left and his inability to assist her threw him almost into despair. But the timely aid of the excellent Gleim, the friend of all the destitute who, out of his own limited means, contrived, one really scarcely knows how, to help all the unhappy came to his relief. "Your letter," writes Voss June 23<sup>rd</sup> 1778, "with its welcome contents reached me the very day when I was in despair how to aid my poor mother, who had just parted with all her little savings to defray my father's funeral expenses. May God bless and reward you - He only can."

On the 27<sup>th</sup> of July, Voss embraced his first-born. "Here," he writes to Gleim, "are the remaining books of the Iliad. I could have sent them eight days ago, had not my wife given me a youngster who occupies all my thoughts and whom I am never tired of looking at, as he lies on his mother's bosom. He is called Frederick after his god-father the poet. God grant he may inherit something of the intellect with the name."

That Providence in whom Voss placed his trust did not desert him. "I have received the offer of the post of head-master at the academy of Otterndorf", he writes Aug. 1779. "Unwilling as I am to sacrifice my independence, I yet feel that duty demands that sacrifice, and I make it without a murmur, nay with joy and gratitude."

It was during the last few days of his residence at Wandsbeck, that Voss was surprised one evening by a visit from his friend Lessing, who was rapidly sinking under the malady which was ere long to

terminate his active and important career. He had always evinced great esteem and even admiration for Voss, and in this their last interview on earth, he expressed himself in terms of such warmth and affection, that the recollection always brought tears into the eyes of the survivor.

Early in September Voss removed to his new abode with which he was at first not a little disappointed. In comfort, it was inferior even to that he had quitted; but the garden, though small, was pleasant and shady, and at its foot flowed the Mime, a clear and rapid stream, which was every morning covered with boats conveying provisions from the neighbouring hamlets to the village. A few days after his arrival the new schoolmaster was solemnly installed in his little domain. The school-room was hung with evergreens and garlands of flowers, and Voss pronounced a discourse in the presence of all the principal inhabitants. His new duties, *new* in every sense of the word, now occupied the greater part of his time and attention, and at first it is evident that the unaccustomed restraint and confinement weighed heavily upon his spirits. Time and habit, however, gradually softened these annoyances, while the tender affection of his young wife, the infantine caresses of his boy, and, above all, the consciousness of fulfilling his duty and insuring a provision for his family reconciled him to every sacrifice. The two half-holidays and the Sabbath were at his own disposal, and not even the youngest of his scholars welcomed them with more delight than the weary school-master, compelled during so many long and tedious hours to devote all

the high faculties of the accomplished scholar and poet to the task of instructing little boys in the first rudiments of Latin. In a letter to Müller 1779, he thus describes his feelings. "The uncertainty of my income as Editor of the "Almanach" induced me to accept this post. Whether I am satisfied? to strangers I reply yes, and cheerfully; but to you I may confess that I would gladly see matters a little improved. From eight till twelve and from two to four o'clock I daily drag the load of my occupation which is generally pretty heavy with plenty of rubbish, and I require at least an hour for preparation. I am paid three hundred thalers (forty-five pounds a year). I could increase this sum by receiving boarders; but as yet I have not been able, as the house will not be completed till next summer. The old school-house lay in a dark narrow street with low rooms, and was always dirty; so they purchased this for me and gave that to the churchwarden. Here from my garden-bower I can overlook the river and the meadows, the tower and the church-yard. It is true we are exposed to east and west-winds, but better this than fog and dirt. The spot is lovely in summer, but in autumn and winter it is sad enough. We have plains all around us; neither mountains, rocks, nor fountains. The water we drink we collect from the roof when it rains, or from butts into which it is suffered to fall. It often smells offensively; but there is no choice. If we want water from the spring, it must be fetched a mile off, and, when it thaws, one cannot ride, much less drive. My refreshment from toil and weariness is my wife, the only friend I have here, and the little fellow who improves every day.

These strengthen me so that I hope to be able to complete the *Odyssey*. As for invention that is all over; I have never time enough to collect my thoughts. The inhabitants are well content with me, and the result is that we are often obliged to visit them. They are good warm-hearted people; only the rich farmers are a little proud of their riches; for wealth here is the only standard of merit.

Meanwhile, despite the small amount of leisure he was able to devote to it, the translation of the *Odyssey* progressed, and in 1779 it was completed. But the love of classical learning was at a low ebb in Germany, and no publisher could be found to offer more than five thalers, or sixteen shillings a sheet. Unwilling to accept so small a remuneration Voss resolved on attempting to publish it by subscription; but here too he met with disappointment and difficulties. "My *Odyssey*", he writes to Gleim March the 30<sup>th</sup> 1780, "which I brought forth with mingled joy and sorrow, which has nearly swallowed up my eye-sight and my little worldly wealth, cannot succeed in making its appearance. I have now only two hundred subscribers. I will not have it printed till I have at least a thousand. Scarcely any of the men who regard themselves as the representatives of our literature deigned to step forward to protect it, except Jacobi and him whom I had offended — Wieland. Ramler writes I must turn the Grecian names into Roman, if his efforts to serve me are to be of any avail. In Suabia they were not ashamed to reply that they would wait for the cheap edition, which would be sure to be issued if my work succeeded."

"I thank you", he writes again on the 17<sup>th</sup> of October, "for the warmth with which you speak of my *Odyssey*. Though I have offered the work at the lowest price I consider possible, it is, it seems, regarded as too high. The booksellers rejoice to see a man who prints and publishes for himself burn his fingers. One indeed told me he would venture the publication, if I would agree to his own price. But my resolution is fixed that the work, once despised, shall not again be offered until it be more decidedly demanded; no, not if I die ere that moment arrives."

In the spring of 1781, the number of subscribers having amounted to above eight hundred, with the promise of many more, Voss ventured to publish his translation at his own expense at Hamburg. The discouraging reception which had attended all his efforts to produce it to the world had so damped his hopes, that he seems to have regarded it rather as a duty to himself than as a step to fame or fortune. It was lucky for him that his hopes were not more sanguine; for, despite the admiration it called forth in many circles, his "*Homer*" did not meet with the success he had at one time fondly anticipated. By some the translation was condemned as too servile, as devoid of vigour and spirit; while others criticised the structure of the rhythm, complaining of certain innovations Voss had introduced. Klopstock, who had lulled himself into the flattering conviction that he had carried the hexameter to the utmost perfection of which it was capable, was indignant at what he called "ridiculous presumption". In justice to Voss, however, we must remember that it was he who first introduced into

his own language the practice of metrical versions. Bodmar's translation of Milton was in prose; so was that of Shakespeare by Wieland. "Whatever his defects", observes Vilmar, "it must not be forgotten that without Voss we should probably have had no Schlegel. He perfected the hexameter; he gave it that pliability which, in the hands of Goethe, rendered it so valuable an instrument." (1) "In the formation of our language", says Schmidt, "his version of Homer has acted no less importantly than Schlegel's Shakespeare." (2) Very different, it must be confessed, is the opinion of another eminent German critic, who accuses our author of "plunging all the worthy poets of old into his witches' cauldron fresh and healthy, whence they come out little Vosses, all marching in buckram." (3)

This criticism may not be without some faint show of truth; but its severity will be acknowledged by all who are acquainted with Voss's versions, or who know the extreme difficulty of rendering verse of any description into a foreign tongue, without losing half its peculiar charms. There is in poetry a subtle, ethereal essence, which, like that of a delicious perfume, escapes in the attempt to transfuse it. A first-rate translator must be himself a poet of no mean eminence. Creative powers, indeed, are not needed; the subject is already sketched to his hand; but to fill up the outlines, to reproduce the hues, the tone

(1) Vilmar, *Geschichte der deutschen Literatur*, 5. Ausgabe, p. 640.

(2) Julian Schmidt, *Geschichte der deutschen Literatur im neunzehnten Jahrhundert*. Leipzig 1856. Vol. 3, p. 24.

(3) Menzel's *Geschichte der deutschen Dichtung*. 2. Ausgabe.

of the original, he must like him be inspired with true poetic fire. He must enter into the very spirit by which his author was animated, he must summon up the same influences which surrounded him. Of this, Voss was not capable. He wanted the "faculty divine". He had neither power, nor passion. But while it cannot be denied that he too often sacrifices grace and passion to mere verbal strictness, it is acknowledged by all classical scholars, that in fidelity, lucidity and correctness, no trifling merits, his translations of Homer and Virgil have rarely been surpassed.

Happily for himself, Voss's mind was less keenly alive to praise or blame than more excitable natures, and he proceeded calmly and steadily in his literary career. Custom had reconciled him to the duties of a schoolmaster, and he would probably have continued at Otterndorf had not the climate, which was damp and unwholesome, exercised an unfavourable influence on the health of his wife and children who were all attacked with the tertian-ague. About the same period he received the offer of a similar situation at Eutin, a village in the neighbourhood of Count Stolberg with whom he had contracted a most intimate friendship at Göttingen, and he removed thither on the 21<sup>st</sup> of July 1782. But here too sorrow and suffering seemed to pursue him. The house was dark, small and low; the roof so badly tiled that the rain soon found its way in. His wife and little ones were again laid on the sick-bed from which they had so lately risen, and his first-born died. "Six weeks ago", he writes to Gleim, "the heaviest blow I have ever endured fell on me. I lost my eldest boy. Could I have



procured a more skilful physician I might have saved him". What unutterable agony lies in these few words!

To add to his trials, his wife's health declined daily. Attributing her state of languor to the condition of their habitation, he resolved to sacrifice every consideration rather than remain. But just as he was about to accept a proposal to direct the department of ancient literature at the University of Halle, the Town-council, unwilling to lose so valuable an instructor, offered to build him a new house, to increase his salary by two hundred thalers and, till the new residence was ready, to provide him with rooms in the "Rathhaus" or Town Hall. These proposals were too advantageous to be refused. "We have now lived for some time in the Rathhaus", writes Voss March 1783 to Bruckner, "and here we can at least breathe; next spring we go to Flensburg. I hope that the sight of her aged mother and the change of air and scene will restore my Ernestine to health".

Time passed on; Mad<sup>me</sup> Voss gradually recovered, and her husband, grateful for the restoration of the being he so fondly loved, happy in the smiles and caresses of his children, always employed, always active, submitted without a murmur to the destiny which condemned him to pass the greater part of his days in the obscure drudgery of a school. Every spare moment was devoted to the translation of the "Iliad" which was actually completed in 1793. Its reception was, on the whole, more favourable than that of the Odyssey. Warned by experience, Voss had

paid greater attention to harmony and grace in the arrangement of his words; and though still deficient in fire and vigour, the *Iliad* was acknowledged by all to be no unfair transcript of the great original.

Scarcely was this work, enough for the life of many men, completed, than the indefatigable Voss, turned to new labours. He commenced the translation of Virgil. "This summer", he writes to Gleim, "I hope to finish my version of the *Georgics*". To this task he brought the most sedulous investigation, the most scrupulous attention. "I am writing the commentary on Virgil a second time", he says in one of his letters to Gleim, "I will publish nothing that is not the fruit of long and careful study. I have but few subscribers; but the profits of the "*Almanach*" will pay for the printing.

Despite the fatigues and annoyances inseparable from his duties as schoolmaster, Voss preferred his position to others more lucrative which would have left him still less time for study. "From nine till twelve, and from two till four", he writes, "I am indeed the schoolmaster; but afterwards the dressing-gown, tea and Ernestine, Homer, my lake and my garden await me, and none dare disturb me. Only unluckily I require four hundred thalers a year more than I get from the school, and I must procure them the best way I can. I do procure them some how or other. The Bishop likes me: Through Count Holmar the question was put to me which I should prefer in return for the dedication of Virgil, money, jewels, or a book. Of course I chose the latter, the Spanish

Don Quixote from which I expect great delight this winter. The wish I expressed to decline a gift altogether was not listened to".

Six months afterwards he informs his friend Müller that the Bishop had added two hundred thalers a year to his income with permission to engage an assistant during half the hours of tuition. "Now", he writes, "I shall have peace and tranquillity which are more to me than anything else". Another inducement to remain at Eutin was the society of his friend Count Stolberg, the companion of his hours both of study and recreation at Göttingen and who, despite the difference of rank and fortune, had always lived with him on terms of almost brotherly intimacy. Unhappily the change which had lately taken place in the religious opinions of Stolberg, and which was gradually preparing his conversion to the Roman-catholic Faith, began to exercise a deleterious influence on his hitherto gay and genial character. "If", writes Voss, "he would only let those who differ from him be at peace as they leave him. We seldom converse now without my being compelled to weigh every word I utter when the subject turns on political or religious freedom". In reply to a letter from Müller who entreated him not to allow a difference of opinion to alter that long and ardent friendship which had hitherto reigned between him and the companion of his youth, and hinted that a want of toleration on his own part might be the cause of their coldness—an observation in which there was much truth—he replies: "Intolerant because I declare that I cannot believe in the Real Presence in the same manner as some other persons!

All I ask is that no one shall detest or persecute another on account of his belief".

Notwithstanding the long and intimate correspondence which Voss had carried on with the excellent Gleim, he had never yet found an opportunity of making his personal acquaintance. At length in 1794, he was enabled to visit the man whom he regarded with almost filial reverence.

"Here we are at length", he writes May 2<sup>nd</sup> to his wife whom the care of an increasing family had retained at Eutin. "Every moment I think of you and wish you were with me to share my happiness. We arrived the day before yesterday. Gleim was at table with his niece and Matthison.<sup>(1)</sup> He received me as a father would receive his last born son, whom he has already given up as lost when he returns from foreign lands. I and Henry (his son) were obliged to occupy the chamber appropriated to guests, where every thing is arranged with only too much elegance. I must take care that I do not return to you quite spoilt, and I must likewise watch over myself lest I should imagine I am really any thing like what the noble old man imagines me. It will be a new spur to me to approach nearer to his ideal of excellence. I can relate nothing, I can only enjoy. When calmer recollection follows, in our snug corner at Eutin I shall have much to tell you; But happy as I am, believe me, amid all my enjoyments, I often long to be at your side again. I clasp you all, great and small, to my heart, but you first and last, my

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(1) The well known poet.

beloved wife". "We returned yesterday from Weimar", he writes the 4<sup>th</sup> of June, "where we were received with infinite friendship. There is something in Wieland's manners which is cold at first, but in conversation he becomes all warmth and energy. His wife too delights me by her unpretending simplicity. Yesterday as I was breakfasting in my room his sons entered; the eldest, a boy about seventeen remarkably clever and intellectual, gave me letters and papers". "My Homer", he adds, "has not succeeded here; it is looked on as too literal; the Odyssey in particular is considered far inferior to the original. After dinner Wieland begged me to read something of my translation of Homer. I replied, laughing, I had already heard that all the trouble I had taken to translate it correctly was lost on the good people of Weimar. Yet I have not worked carelessly, but after long consideration had chosen that path which seemed to me the best, though now it would appear I was mistaken. I should be glad to determine on which side lay the error. I had worked for the ear, not for the eye. The Iliad was presented to me, and I begged for strict oral attention. I read about two hundred verses from the twenty-third song. When I had concluded, Herder broke into the loudest exclamations of approbation. Such melody, such clearness he had not anticipated. All reproaches of affectation and exaggeration disappeared. He fancied, he said, he had heard Homer himself. I was requested earnestly to lay my theory before the world. In short my Homer was justified. They confessed they ought to study this new system and that our public

would follow in time. We took a walk in the Royal gardens. At that moment Madame Wieland came with a written invitation from Goethe. To-morrow at mid-day, without my arrival having been announced to him, I am invited to his house. Wieland was engaged, so that he could not accompany me. Goethe resides in a splendid mansion, richly adorned with pictures and statues of antiquity. Wieland soon followed, and we sat down to table. We talked of Italy, Greece, &c. and I perceived that Goethe often closely examined me. He was at first reserved; but gradually became animated. After dinner we repaired to the garden-cabinet and drank coffee. He showed us letters and pictures of the painter Maizer—a most exquisite genius. The conversation was very friendly and intimate. Goethe asked why I must go so soon. He begged me to give him a day. This morning I am to see his works of art, and in the afternoon to dine with him in the same society as yesterday. After dinner I went with Herder to smoke a pipe with him in his study. Goethe is a decided enemy to tobacco. The conversation fell on Niebuhr, whom he highly esteemed. He was throughout full of kindness and attention; we were summoned to tea. All surrounded me and begged for some details as to my researches into Homer. The conversation fell principally on the Homeric geography which greatly interested them. I had to explain the map of the Odyssey. Decidedly I think they are converted to my tenets in poetic matters”.

In this flattering idea, however, Voss was not entirely correct. Towards the end of July he returned

to that home which absence had only rendered dearer to his heart. "What a meeting", he writes to the paternal friend he had just quitted! "I could scarcely restrain my emotion when I reckoned the hour of my return. I travelled all night, stopped only two hours at Lübeck and flew to my dear Eutin. I was so exhausted when the first moment of joy was over I could neither speak nor think; but the following day I was as merry as a fish. There was no end of delight and astonishment at the number of presents I produced from my friend; but when at length Henry with an air of great importance, drew forth a small packet, and proudly declared he alone had been let into the secret of its contents by father Gleim we were overpowered; we felt it was too much. Doubtless you have deprived yourself and your niece of this treasure from which I have so often sugared my straw-berries. Thanks, a thousand thanks for your love and friendship". This treasure was a beautiful filagree sugar-bason which the good old Gleim had concealed in his friend's trunk.

The peaceful tenour of Voss's existence was disturbed by an event which, of all others, he least anticipated. His friend Count Stolberg who, in the overwrought enthusiasm of a Neophyte, regarded all those who differed from him in creed with mingled horror and pity, as beings condemned to eternal perdition whose very proximity brought danger and destruction, withdrew his son from Voss's school. The reason alleged was that the religious principles inculcated in this establishment were in fact so much poison, which the boy's affection for his tutor rendered more

pernicious. Voss was deeply wounded. "I have heard with amazement", he writes to Gleim, "that I prepare a subtle poison for my pupils. The observations I made were not new to Stolberg. I had observed in speaking of Abraham's offering up his son as a sacrifice, that he was right to do it, because he received the command from the Deity himself; but that the deed was not right or at least would have been a crime under any other circumstances. A fanatic at Eutin had lately committed a terrible crime with the best intentions. At the command of God, as he firmly maintained, he had cut off the heads of his no less believing wife and daughter, after pious prayers, dressed in their Sunday garb, and had afterwards attempted self-destruction that he might go, as he called it, pure with the pure to Heaven."

From these annoyances, Voss turned for consolation to study and composition. In 1795 he completed his "Louise", a work which for a considerable time enjoyed an immense and, as it must be owned, inconceivable popularity in Germany. Still, although the details are minute even to tediousness, there is a touching naiveté in many of the descriptions which present no inconsiderable charm to the lovers of nature and simplicity. Here again we are at issue with Menzel who, with more wit than truth, declares that "the 'Louise' and Voss's other productions deserve to be immortal, only because they are the records of the whole family cockering of the last century". True, Voss enters into many details which we should think absurd and trifling; he forces us to be present at the boiling of the kettle and the cooking of the fish. A page and a half are devoted to the



annoyance of the good old lady, the pastor's wife, on the loss of her keys, and other incidents equally interesting; but all this is preserved from vulgarity, and in some measure redeemed, by the purity of the sentiments and by occasional touches of simple pathos and tenderness.

The plan of "Louise" is too well known to allow of our offering more than a brief outline. The hero is the pastor of Grunau, the heroine his youthful daughter, and the poem opens on her eighteenth birth-day which is to be passed in an excursion on the river with her accepted lover, the preceptor of a young count who resides in a neighbouring castle. The second canto is filled up by the details of a visit from the Countess and her daughter, the third by those of the wedding-day. The richness of the gifts and the excellence of the dinner are commented on with a degree of interest, to understand which we must be fully acquainted with the peculiarities of the German nation, with that strange medley of the ideal and the commonplace, the enthusiasm for the grand and beautiful, and the love for good cheer and house-hold comforts, which characterize that singular people. But these puerilities are followed by a scene of exceeding beauty in which the good pastor bestows his paternal benediction on his child. We have ventured to alter the metre, which like that of all Voss's compositions, is in hexameters.

God's blessing on thee, my beloved girl!  
Daughter! I have been young and now am old;  
Yet never have I seen the honest child  
Of honest parents hapless or forlorn.  
Full many a joy the Almighty hath bestowed

And many a sorrow; thanks to him for both!  
Now gladly will I lay this aged head  
Beneath the sod; for I have lived to see  
My daughter happy even when I'm afar.  
She knows that, like a loving father, God  
Cares for his little ones, and blesses oft  
E'en by our sorrows. How my soul is moved  
At the sweet aspect of a girlish bride,  
When in her simple innocence she goes  
Laughing and trusting at her bridegroom's side,  
Prepared to endure whatever may befall,  
To heighten all his joys, share all his woes,  
And, if God wills, e'en from his dying brow  
To wipe the last cold drops. 'Twas thus my soul,  
Thrilled with emotion, when I fondly led  
My young wife home. Joyful, yet serious too  
I pointed out our quiet hamlet's bounds,  
The stately castle-towers, the tall church-spire  
And, amid verdant glades, the pastor's home  
Where so much bliss and grief awaited us.  
And thou, my only child—for all the rest  
Sleep in yon churchyard, 'neath the flowery sod  
Thou, sole remaining comfort of my age,  
Thou too wilt leave thine home! My daughter's room  
Will soon be empty; vacant too her place  
Beside the social board. In vain my ear  
Will fondly listen for her well-known voice,  
For her beloved footstep—yes, mine own,  
When, following thy husband, thou art gone,  
I shall gaze after thee with tearful eyes.  
I am a man, a father, and my heart  
Clings with paternal love unto my child.  
But quickly shall I raise my drooping brow,  
Wipe my sad eyes, and fold my hands in prayer,  
Humbling myself before that gracious Power  
Who watches o'er His flock." &c.

The "Louise" and the "Idyls", by which it was speedily followed not only elevated Voss to a high rank among the literary men of his native land, but gave him for the moment a certain European celebrity. The Danish author Baggesen, who visited Germany in 1786 declares that he was scarcely less anxious to see him than to behold Goethe and Schiller. "He stood before me", says Baggesen, "with a genuine smile of spring on his open brow. Ernestine was a little rosy-cheeked good-natured woman. I had almost taken a cup of coffee from her hands though you know it is poison to me, so vivid was my recollection of the coffee in "Louise" I turned the conversation to the work so dear to me. I begged him to read us a portion of this Homeric master-piece. Nothing more perfectly harmonious or heart-stirring did I ever hear. And this man must spend the greater part of the day in teaching boys *fero, tuli, latum, ferre*, and the few hours he can steal from his daily duties, in correcting the columns of a slavish translation! We had a long talk about hexameters in which metre Voss unquestionably holds the same rank among the Germans as Virgil held among the Romans. Voss is a school-master; but there is no reason why he should not be the chancellor of a university; he is one of the most learned men of his age, especially in ancient Philology."

This admiration may seem to us a little exaggerated; but as it is the fashion of the present day, even in Germany, to depreciate the merits of Voss's productions to almost as great a degree as it once was to over-rate them, it may not be amiss to remind

our readers that Schiller was a great admirer of the "Louise". In his essay on "Naive and Sentimental Poetry", he observes "it resembles the antique in its purity and simplicity". Niebuhr declared that if called on to decide between "Louise" and Homer, he should be at a loss which to choose! While Madame Staël with more discrimination acknowledges that the subject indeed is trivial, but expresses her deep sense of the touching purity which pervades the whole.

The "Louise" was followed at some distance of time, by "The Seventy years' Birthday" and other poems of the same nature. In all these there is too much of the common every-day realities of life, too much garrulity, too many colloquial platitudes "the mere trade of versifying", as a German critic calls it. (1) The question, whether the most ordinary objects the most common events may not be fit themes for poetry, is one which has been often and warmly debated, especially between the rival schools of our own language. Doubtless, there is poetry everywhere and in every thing; the difficulty is to discover it and to draw it forth, to know, like Murillo, how to represent even a beggar-boy subjecting his head to one of the most unpoetical of operations with a truth almost startling, and yet with such consummate art as to divest it of every thing coarse or disgusting. This marvellous result may be traced to the fitness of expression, the intelligence which sparkles in the eyes and breathes upon the lips, to the play of light

(1) *Philosophy's Criticism der deutschen Literatur von Schiller ist in unserer Zeit.*

and shade, nay to the very luxury of rags, invested by their peculiar arrangement with a certain picturesque grace. But in poetry the problem is far more difficult of solution. Painting "steals but a glimpse from time." Its action is confined to a moment, while that of poetry necessarily extends over a considerable period. It has to dive into the recesses of the human heart, to point out the secret springs and motives of action, while painting has but to represent their outward aspect. It was not to be expected that Voss should fulfil all the conditions necessary to endow the humblest objects with high poetic charms; but the truth and simplicity of his descriptions of country life and rural manners rendered them dear to his countrymen. Besides, he was a sort of connecting link in the German literature of his day. He gathered round him the old and the new school, the lovers of classic lore, the admirers of Klopstock, the friends of Wieland and the partizans of the "Hainbund". This may diminish our astonishment that, while many modern critics deny him the smallest claim to literary excellence, his contemporaries should have exalted him to the very summit of poetic fame.

Meanwhile constant application and the fatiguing duties of his office had seriously impaired Voss's health, and in May 1802 he sent in his resignation. A pension of eighty pounds per annum was settled on him. He chose Jena as his residence. "You will be glad to hear", writes his wife to Müller, "that our dear Voss has at length found the tranquillity he has so long needed and desired. We left Eutin sad and dispirited; but we are strengthened in the hopes

of a brighter future. Our eldest boys, who had already studied three years in Jena, have been fortunate enough to be adopted as children in the house of our excellent friends the G—s, who have placed a suite of rooms at our disposal. A house and garden, just such as we desired, have presented themselves; in the spring we shall take possession and thank God who has fixed us in so sweet a spot. You will not find Voss much altered. This morning when we celebrated our *Silberne Hochzeit*<sup>(1)</sup> his eyes shone as brightly as when we commenced our career together."

In the summer of 1805 Voss left Jena for Heidelberg, whither he was summoned by the Grand-Duke of Baden, ostensibly to undertake the office of Principal of the College he had just established in that town, but in reality merely to give it *éclat* by his presence; as although he received a considerable stipend, no positive duties were assigned him. "We live here", he writes to Müller; "still in some confusion; but we hope soon to have a house and garden of our own, and then my accustomed love for work and song will return with such youthful zest that the echoes from the valley of the Neckar will force their way to your valley of the Danube and excite you to vie with me in my efforts. How singular that the last relics of the Hainbund in the winter of their days should be placed in each others' vicinity. Who would have prophesied that at Göttingen? God guides us."

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(1) Or Silver Wedding: the celebration of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the wedding-day is thus called in Germany.

VOSS availed himself of his recovered leisure to complete a translation of Horace, Hesiod and Theocritus with notes and commentaries. The first of these was generally allowed to be a failure. "The *curiosa felicitas* of the Roman lyricist," says an English Reviewer, (1) "was of a nature too subtle, too delicate, to be caught and reflected in his somewhat unbending strains."

Well would it have been for his own peace of mind had he confined himself to these innocent labours! but in his zeal for the Protestant cause, and his indignation at Stolberg's conversion to the Church of Rome, he published a violent attack on his former friend strangely in contradiction with his usual mildness of character and with the principles of that religion which commands us to "forgive all things." He forgot that intolerance, always so hateful, is doubly so in the followers of a religion the very existence of which is based upon the principles of toleration alone.

Some consideration was surely due to the recollection of former friendship, to Stolberg's personal virtues, and above all to the precarious state of his health. How completely, however, not only himself but many of his friends were persuaded of the justice of his cause and the propriety of his conduct may be inferred from the following letter of his son Henry to Jean Paul Richter. (1)

"The work of my father will fill you with astonishment and admiration, yes, with the liveliest joy and sympathy. It is an historical answer to the question; how did Fritz Stolberg become a slave? A true

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(1) Heinrich's Voss's Briefwechsel mit Jean Paul Richter.

watch-word for reason and freedom. It will be a cannon-shot through the souls of the so-called Holsteiner knights, and will crush them. Yes though its destructive powers will bring them a blessing. At first there was much in the work that pained me, as it seemed little suited to the image of Stolberg, such as I had always borne it within my soul.

As I grew up under his eyes my parents never allowed me to see the dark side of this otherwise loveable character; they would not deprive me of my confidence in a man who always demeaned himself towards me with such true paternal affection, and towards my father with as much kindness as his passions would admit of. Why, you will say, this work after a lapse of so many years? My father has felt himself bound to speak, as theologians are silent. He had no rest night nor day. Now that it is done he feels a joy that can be bestowed, only by the consciousness of having done right." It must have needed all Voss's imaginary sense of having fulfilled a sacred duty, to calm his grief, perhaps remorse, when, a few months afterwards, Stolberg sank into a premature grave, worn out rather by grief than illness. He did feel it deeply; but he consoled himself by the belief that his pamphlet had not had any share in hastening the event. Increasing infirmities reminded Voss of the approach of old age; but his mental powers retained their full vigour and in 1818 in concert with his son Henry he produced a translation of Shakespeare. To this and this only, the harsh observations of Menzel may in some degree apply. In comparison with Schlegel's masterly version, Voss's is a complete failure. The



spirit of poetry is wanting. It is a mere daguerreotype, in which, while an exact likeness is preserved, every charm is destroyed and every defect exaggerated.

For many years Voss's domestic happiness had continued unbroken. But a heavy blow was at hand. His son Henry, one of the most promising youths in Germany, was torn from him by death. The old man bowed submissively though with breaking heart beneath the will of Providence. After the funeral he approached his weeping wife, the Bible in his hand; and with tears streaming down his venerable cheeks, read aloud from the twelfth chapter of the Second Book of Samuel, "*While the child was yet alive I fasted and wept &c.*" then seating himself beside the faithful partner of his joys and sorrows, he strove to console her by the certainty of a re-union with the object of their affection in another and better world.

Time restored Voss's tranquillity, and his seventieth birthday was passed as usual in domestic hilarity. Shortly afterwards, however, while his mental faculties were still in their full vigour he was seized with fainting fits and difficulty of breathing. Still he suffered little, conversed with his usual cheerfulness and often spoke of immortality in a tone which showed how firm was his belief in Revelation. Thus he lingered for some days, till one night he suddenly expired without a sigh or a struggle. A smile yet lingered on his countenance. He had gone to that God in whom he had so firmly trusted during his long and chequered career.

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## CHAPTER VII.

### STOLBERG. HOELTY. CLAUDIUS.

**STOLBERG.—HIS BIRTH AND EDUCATION; COLLEGE LIFE; FRIENDSHIP FOR VOSS.—POEMS.—WORLDLY CONDITION.—MARRIAGE.—DEATH OF WIFE.—SECOND UNION.—ACQUAINTANCE WITH THE PRINCESS GALITZIN.—HER HISTORY.—STOLBERG'S CONVERSION.—VOSS'S AND JACOBI'S INDIGNATION.—OBSERVATIONS.—STOLBERG'S DEATH.—HOELTY.—HIS BOYHOOD.—GÖTTINGEN.—HOELTY'S CHARACTER AND MENTAL DEVELOPEMENT.—HIS POEMS.—ILLNESS.—DEATH.—CLAUDIUS.—HIS POEMS.**

THE names of Stolberg, Hoelty and Claudius three of the most important members of the Hainbund, are so intimately connected with that of Voss that we think it as well to offer a brief sketch of their lives immediately after his. That of Stolberg owes its interest in a great measure to his conversion to the Romish church and the immense sensation that conversion made throughout Germany.

Leopold Frederick Stolberg was born in the year 1750, at Braunstadt a small village in Holstein. His father who was Chamberlain to the Queen of Denmark, cultivated with the utmost attention those mental powers for which his son was early distinguished. In 1796

he was sent with his brother Christian to Göttingen. Here he formed that friendship with Voss which was destined to exercise so powerful an influence over the minds of both, to continue so long and to end so sadly. There was much that was noble and generous in the character of Stolberg. Warm-hearted and affectionate, his attachments were no less deep than passionate. Notwithstanding the strong line of demarcation which, at that time, existed between the nobility and the plebeians in Germany, he never permitted the difference of rank or fortune to interfere with his friendships for those who, like Voss and Hoelty, were in a position so far inferior to his own. Voss exercised over the young man the influence of a strong mind over a weak one; for in firmness of purpose, in decision and resolution, Stolberg was always deficient. Carried away by first impressions, and rarely giving himself the time or trouble to examine both sides of any question, however, important, he was perpetually veering from one extreme to the other, always enthusiastic, and always sincere in his opinions and feelings while they lasted; but changing them too frequently and too suddenly to inspire much confidence either in their solidity or in their duration. Although not endowed with genius of a high order, or with the creative faculty, he was still in many respects a true poet, and his ballads, from their warmth, their feeling, their sweetness and simplicity, obtained a lasting popularity. They were the true out-pourings of a heart which whatever its errors, was full of tender enthusiasm; running over with all the kindest sympathies of our nature. The following may serve as a specimen.

## LAY OF THE SUABIAN KNIGHT TO HIS SON.

Take my son, thy father's spear  
This weak arm, no more can bear;  
Take the shield, to guard at need,  
Mount henceforth my gallant steed.

Fifty years, upon my head  
Has this iron helmet weigh'd.  
Every year, my sword, my life  
Have I risk'd in war and strife.

Duke Rudolf, my honour'd Lord  
Gave this spear, and shield, and sword,  
For his cause I still maintain'd  
And proud Henry's pay disdain'd.

Staunch in freedom's cause he stood,  
Shed for it his noble blood  
And despite full many a wound  
Gallantly he held his ground.

Hasten to the war's alarms  
Emperor Conrad calls to arms;  
Son, thine aid, I should not seek,  
Were this hand less old and weak.

Never draw in vain the brand  
For thy dear, thy native land,  
Vigilant in watch by night,  
And by day the first in fight.

Every peril swift to meet  
Always seek the conflict's heat,  
Spare the unresisting breast,  
Strike down every haughty crest.

If in vain thy standard wave  
O'er thy faltering troop; then brave,  
Firm as some unshaken tower  
All the foe's advancing power.

Seven lov'd sons—brave spirits all  
Have I seen before me fall,  
And thy mother broken-hearted,  
Faded, pined and then departed.

Lonely am I now and old,  
But thy shame were hundred-fold  
Heavier to this aged breast  
Than the loss of all the rest.

Dread not death, for die we must  
In the Almighty place thy trust,  
Fight as fought thy sires of yore  
And rejoice this heart once more.

In 1764, Frederick Stolberg left Göttingen for a widely different sphere. He was attached as royal page to the Danish court and not long afterwards was appointed *Chargé d'affaires* at Lübeck. Here, in the discharge of his not very onerous duties which afforded ample leisure for poetical and literary pursuits, he passed some of the happiest years of his life. The purest domestic felicity was added to his other enjoyments, for in 1773, he had married Agnes, Countess of Witzleben, a woman equally distinguished by the graces of mind and person, and who, during her short life, exercised a most salutary influence on her husband's character. But in 1788 death deprived him of this beloved companion of his youth who had borne him four children. Stolberg's grief was deep and sincere, and it was long ere he could rouse him-

self from the profound melancholy into which this bereavement had plunged him. His friends, alarmed at his condition, urged him to seek for active employment. He followed their counsel and accepted the post of Ambassador at Berlin. The engrossing duties of his new position, the change of scene, the distractions of the world gradually softened his sorrow, and the desire of giving a mother to his orphan-children, who were at that age when they most required maternal care, induced him to think upon a second marriage. Sophia, Countess of Dinadra, a woman of great cultivation of mind, and large fortune was the object of his choice. He married her in 1790, and the year following, being appointed President of Eutin, he removed thither with his wife and family. Here he renewed his ancient acquaintance with Voss. Their friendship remained for some years unbroken and would probably have continued so to the end, had it not been for those religious differences which, once excited, are of all the most difficult to appease. In the life of Voss, we have entered with some detail into this subject. Here therefore we must content ourselves with observing that Stolberg's mind, naturally inclined at once to religious doubts and religious enthusiasm, had long been verging towards Catholicism, which he regarded as the sole refuge from the uncertainties, the fears and the scruples which tormented him. Many circumstances had tended to develope this inclination, and to draw him to that church which by its very pretensions to infallibility, seems to offer a calm and secure haven to the soul long tossed on the ocean of doubt and uncertainty. The Revolution

of 1796 had struck him with horror and dismay. All those deep religious sentiments which had gradually taken the place of the indifference he had shared in youth with most of his contemporaries, all those aristocratic prejudices, all that pride of birth, which had hitherto lain dormant in his breast, seemed at once to awake and call for satisfaction. He saw in that Revolution the destruction not only of royalty, to which he was firmly and conscientiously attached, but of religion itself. The early impressions of his childhood, the enthusiasm of his nature, drew him towards the Roman-catholic faith. The Ultra-protestantism of those by whom he was surrounded had displeased and disgusted him, and, in 1800, he laid down his employment and retired to Münster. Here he became acquainted with the Princess Galitzin, who was destined to exercise so important an influence on his mind. Distinguished alike by warmth of heart and superiority of talent, born to the very highest rank, her spirit sought enjoyment in other and loftier spheres of thought and action. She formed a new intellectual existence for herself; but so high was her standard of excellence, that she found it impossible ever to attain it. "She was one of those" observes Goethe, "of whom one can form no idea without having seen her, and who cannot be rightly judged of, unless regarded less in connexion, than in conflict with her own age and the circumstances which surrounded her. She came too soon to the persuasion that the world can give us nothing; that we must retire within ourselves, as in a narrow circle for time and eternity. As the fairest mediator between both worlds,

she regarded a life of active benevolence, and her existence was occupied with practices of religion and charity. To these, though always subordinate, she united the highest intellectual cultivation enlightened by philosophy and cheered by art. When others would have fancied they had reached the goal, she considered herself but at the starting-point; but intellectual superiority did not suffice her. She panted for higher things, her restless spirit sought them long and found them at length, or fancied she found them in religious conviction, and in what she considered the motherly bosom of the Roman-catholic church.

She was born in 1734 at Berlin, of one of the noblest families in Prussia.<sup>(1)</sup> Though her parents were of the Protestant faith, she was educated in a convent on account of the superior nature of the instruction imparted there. Her mind had early been impressed with the solemnity of those rites of which she had been so often a silent observer, and with the imposing nature of that religion in one of whose sanctuaries her childhood and early youth had been passed. Lovely and gifted to no common degree, she left the cloister at eighteen, and not long after, her parents bestowed her hand on Dinadra, Count of Galitzin, a man of amiable manners and pleasing exterior but who, absorbed by worldly obligations and amusements, and infected with the libertine philosophy of the eighteenth century, was incapable of comprehending or satisfying the young and enthusiastic mind committed to his charge. Alone

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(1) „Die Fürstin Galitzin und ihre Freunde.“ Rhein. Jahrbücher für Kunst und Poesie. 1840.



in heart and affections, despite outward splendour and prosperity, she resolved to fly the world and devote herself to charity, study and her children. She retired to the country, cut off her hair and spent all the time not engrossed in superintending the education of her daughters in religious studies. Unhappy in the midst of all that usually bestows happiness, she threw herself heart and soul into the Catholic faith and there found, or thought she found that peace which no earthly blessings had been able to bestow. It was at this period she became acquainted with Stolberg. She soon convinced him that Catholicism alone offered that stability and security which his agitated mind so much needed. He seized it eagerly and for ever quitted the religion of his fathers. This conversion although not unexpected, excited, as we have already seen, the most violent horror and indignation among his former friends. They had not learnt the most important of all lessons, the lesson of toleration, and their fury was almost as great as though Stolberg had committed the most fearful crime. We know how deeply Voss was shocked and grieved. Gleim and Jacobi were no less so. They regarded Catholicism as little better than utter disbelief, as a complete prostration of the mind and soul to what they considered the power of demons. Jacobi judged this "apostasy", as he called it with even more horror than Voss, and his expressions on the subject are more severe than one would have expected from his usually gentle spirit. "I cannot regard it as a matter of conviction," he says, "when an evangelical Protestant becomes a Papist. Not a word of Popery

stands in the Bible. To see this requires only eyes and understanding. He therefore who becomes a Roman-catholic, leaves the Bible for something else, and that is the case with my unhappy Stolberg. He has bowed himself beneath the sceptre of a tyrant, who would crush all who do not think as he does. He believes that the spirit of man must again sink into slavery. No, it is no innocent delusion which has deceived you Stolberg. A mixture of passions which you carefully nursed and cherished in your heart, can alone render such a folly possible, I hear the scornful laughter of Hell at your pious deed. Soon it will resound audibly and universally, and you yourself will not be able to stop your ears against it." <sup>(1)</sup>

To account for language so little consonant with the mild spirit of Christianity, we must remember that Germany had been the great battle-ground between the rival sects and that, in consequence, the passions on both sides had been excited to the uttermost. Even when the struggle was over, the animosities it had roused did not immediately subside. They left a feeling of mutual bitterness more particularly on the part of the Protestants, although, in a great part of Germany the triumph had been on their side. Jacobi's indignation was mingled with grief really touching from its depth and sincerity. "His presence would kill me", he writes to a friend, "I will weep for the deeply-fallen in the arms of others. Heavens such a man! Stolberg with a rosary and a torch in his hand, sprinkling himself with

<sup>(1)</sup> Briefe von Jacobi an seine Freunde. 1786. Voss und Stolberg von Schott 1793.

holy-water, or bearing the train of some monk or priest." "I am not cold or unloving", he writes to Stolberg himself, August the 18<sup>th</sup> 1800, "had I loved you less, had I clung to you less you could not have so wrung and wounded my heart. Your memory will remain holy to me; but that it must so remain we must meet no more. Spare my inexpressible anguish. You may hope, that by-and-by, I may change my decision. According to your mode of thinking you must so hope. I have no hope. No enthusiasm supports me. My loss is irrevocable and eternal. For the sake of our former friendship answer me not. That I can never look on this question otherwise than as I now regard it, that this view can be altered neither by time nor suffering is certain. If you could comprehend it, all would be otherwise; I am not offended even if in your heart you accuse me of passion and cruelty; only grant my request and all may go well with you." This letter was not intended for publication, but it appeared in the "New Theological Annals" two years later. Time had somewhat softened the bitterness of the first impression; Jacobi began to feel that a man might differ from himself in his religious opinions, nay might even change these opinions, and from sincere conviction adopt a faith he himself detested, without having become a criminal in the eyes either of God or man. In some of his letters he endeavours to excuse himself for the violence of his expressions under the first shock of this unexpected event. "It came upon me," he writes to a friend, "like a thunderbolt from the blue heavens above me. It was more than I could

bear. Horrified at my friend's conduct and at my own loss, I poured loudly forth the anguish that filled my soul. Yes, I was angry, not with hate, but as offended love is angry. My impartial reason could have excused Stolberg but my partial heart could not endure the thought that he should need such an excuse!"<sup>(1)</sup>

That Stolberg's conversion had been the result of sincere conviction cannot be doubted. His feelings may be learnt from the following letter to Lavater, October 26<sup>th</sup> 1800. "You are quite right, my loved and honoured friend, to trust me wholly. I was far from accepting the Roman-catholic faith, when on reading your hymn 'He who loves not Jesus wholly,' I said 'Amen' to every line. I knew well how many enemies this Christian mode of thinking had made you among zealots. Not for the great truths which both religions have in common, but for the protest, for the negative. Such alone are those who, some with severity, some with scorn, have blamed the step which I and my Sophia, after seven years' examination, after daily prayer to the Spirit of Truth and not without combats of many descriptions have at length taken. Had I not survived the nearly complete extinction of the Protestant church, still I could no longer have been at home in her halls, without an altar, and without a priest. They would much mistake both the Church and myself who imagine she teaches me to condemn you, or to doubt the relations which exist in you and other upright men to holiness and God. With peace and joy I think upon

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<sup>(1)</sup> Jacobi although principally distinguished as a philosopher wrote some very agreeable verses.

the saint whom twelve years ago God called from my side to another and a better world. She became a Catholic earlier than I; twelve years earlier, a member of that great universal church whose children, some scattered here on earth in toil and conflict, some in burning flames atoning for their sins, are all yet blessed in the certain hope of one day pouring forth their Hallelujah at the throne of God and the Lamb. God, who lets his sun shine alike on the guilty and the innocent allows so many Protestants to remain in error and to believe that the Roman-catholic church, that really merciful mother is intolerant and cruel &c." (1) This conversion was the principal, indeed the sole event of any importance which marked Stolberg's latter years. Though he did not abandon literature, his writings became entirely religious or polemical. "His history of the 'Religion of Jesus', written at this period is" observes Hildebrandt "a singular mixture of history and legend, of the true and the false, the real and the imaginary, the vulgar and the sublime; (2) but it proves at all events how earnestly he endeavours to discover the truth and how he longed for its light." Stolberg died in 1819 on his estate at Osnabrück. It is painful to reflect that his latter moments were embittered by that pamphlet which his former friend Voss, in a burst of mistaken religious enthusiasm, had directed against him and of which we have spoken in the life of that author.

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(1) Voss und Stolberg von Schott.

(2) Hildebrandt's Geschichte der deutschen Literatur seit Lessing bis auf die Gegenwart. The latest edition of Stolberg's poems is in 1839.

Stolberg composed several dramas but they are beneath criticism.

Let us now turn to Hoelty, whose brief and uneventful career, will not long detain us, though his verses have a charm greater than many of far loftier pretensions. Hoelty was a native of Hannover. He was born in 1785 and in early childhood attracted attention by his ardent thirst for knowledge and his extreme beauty. The latter, however, was of brief duration. When scarcely nine years old, a violent attack of small-pox deprived him for a considerable period of sight, and though he ultimately recovered, his personal attractions disappeared for ever. The illness and death of his mother, to whom he was most fondly attached just as he was passing the threshold of childhood, contributed to sadden his naturally joyous nature and to give a tint of melancholy to his character, prophetic perhaps of his early doom. He sought consolation in study, to which he devoted himself with an ardour most injurious to his delicate health. At the age of twenty he proceeded to Göttingen to prepare himself for the duties of a clergyman. The principal portion of his time was engrossed by the study of theology, but he found leisure to acquire a thorough knowledge of French, English and Italian, all of which he wrote and spoke with elegance and correctness. In these languages he gave lessons and thus eked out his scanty means. He soon formed an intimate acquaintance with Voss, Claudius &c., and became one of the leading members of the Hainbund. The charms of an existence so congenial to his taste excited the wish to prolong his residence

at Göttingen beyond the three years which constitute the prescribed period of study, and by means of private lessons he contrived to effect his purpose. He led, generally speaking, a retired and studious life varied only by the evenings passed in the society of his chosen friends, or by long and solitary rambles in the beautiful neighbourhood. Here he might frequently be seen, pacing silently along with abstracted look and careless step, or stretched at full length beneath some shady tree, a book on his lap, but seemingly lost in thought. It was on these occasions that many of his poems were written; but more were composed in the silent hour of midnight, when all save himself were wrapt in peaceful slumbers. Intense study and over-exertion were gradually undermining a constitution never strong, and weakened by early suffering. The pale cheek, the languid step, the constant hacking cough had already excited the alarm of his friends; but he had laughed away their fears, though a secret presentiment seems long to have warned him of his approaching end. Sometimes he would strive to drown the secret forebodings that assailed him, by mingling in the noisy revelry of his companions; this, however, was of rare occurrence. In general he shunned these scenes of uproarious mirth, and sought refuge in reflexion and solitude or in a still purer and higher source of consolation. Despite his narrow circumstances and lonely position, there were few perhaps to whom existence had greater charms. His passionate love of nature in all her forms, his simplicity and kindness of heart, which, by enabling him to sympathize alike with the joys and sorrows of all around, afforded him

a perpetual source of interest and occupation, the consciousness of talents of a high order, the hope of winning poetic fame, all combined to render the idea of being thus early torn from the world inexpressibly painful to a mind in which susceptibility to enjoyment was a peculiar attribute. If, therefore, he could look death calmly in the face, and while speaking of the pleasures of life, like a Greek or a Roman, prepare for immortality like a Christian, it was because his religion, though seldom on his lips, was in reality the guiding principle of all his actions. It had saved him from immorality and excess in the days of health and strength, it lent him courage and comfort in the hour of trial, and enabled him to meet with resignation his inevitable doom. "Hoelty", says Voss September 2<sup>nd</sup> 1772, "is just what he paints himself in his poems. To look at him, no one would imagine he had either wit or gaiety. In company he sits motionless, his eyes fixed on the ground without seeming to hear what is said to him; but the next day he repays us for this silence by an excellent poem. At other times he is sufficiently cheerful, and I have seen him merry; but there is something peculiar even in his mirth. To the deepest sensibility he unites the tenderest of hearts and no common acquaintance with poets and poetry. He reads them in the original, in Greek, Latin, French, English and Italian. In the latter I am now enjoying the benefit of his instruction." (1)

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(1) Döring's Leben von Voss, p. 103.



Indeed, though generally silent and even moody, there were moments when his naturally cheerful temperament resumed its rights and burst forth with a humour and merriment which rendered him the charm of the social circle. Injustice or cruelty never failed to rouse him to indignation, and he would sometimes declare that, rather than witness them, he would live in a cavern in the mountains far from all human society. In his wanderings there was one spot for which he evinced a marked predilection. It was a little chesnut-grove opening upon a wide and verdant meadow, and his great delight was to watch the sun-set light up the dark trees with its golden hues or the moon-beams stream through the branches and fling their silvery light upon the green-sward beneath. It was under the influence of these fair scenes he composed the following poem.

#### THE MAY-NIGHT.

When through the trees the silvery moon is beaming,  
And on the bank her sleeping light is gleaming,  
When the sweet nightingale pours forth her lay,  
Sadly I wander on, through bush and brake.

Melodious nightingale! How art thou blest!  
Thy faithful help-mate shares thy little nest,  
And thus her fond and tuneful spouse she blesses  
With a thousand innocent caresses.

Beneath the embowering shade the faithful dove  
Pours forth the tender story of her love;  
I turn aside and darker shadows seek,  
And lonely tears bedew my pallid cheek.

Bright vision which like morning's early ray  
Shines on my soul! where shall I find thee? say!  
Ah! at the thought my bosom thrills with woe,  
And o'er my cheeks the tears more quickly flow.

The song of the nightingale indeed always filled him with mingled pleasure and melancholy, and he would sometimes playfully express a hope that the feathered warblers would come and sing on his grave, as they did on that of Walter von der Vogelweide, "although", he would add with a smile, "I have not the means of leaving them a legacy as he did. The plaintive tone of these little compositions is singularly contrasted with those written perhaps somewhat earlier, ere the slow finger of decay had become so evident even to himself. Of these the most striking are "The Summons to Rejoice" and "The Duties of Life".

#### A SUMMONS TO REJOICE.

Ah! who would yield to care and sadness  
While youth and spring are bright as now?  
Who in his morn of bloom and gladness  
Would knit in gloomy folds his brow?

Joy beckons wheresoe'er we wander  
E'en in this pilgrim-life of ours,  
If on cross-roads we pause to ponder,  
E'en there she brings her wreath of flowers.

The stream is rippling now as lightly,  
The bowers are still as green, and lone  
The moon is shining quite as brightly,  
As when through Eden's trees she shone.

The purple grape has still the power  
To cheer the heart when aught's amiss;

Still sweet in evening's balmy hour  
From rosy lips affection's kiss.

The nightingale its music pouring,  
From yonder grove delights the breast,  
E'en to the broken heart restoring  
In accents sweet a moment's rest.

Bright earth! each charm in thee is blended,  
A fitting scene for joy and mirth!  
And till my mortal course is ended,  
Will I rejoice in thee, fair Earth!

#### THE DUTIES OF LIFE.

Strew, oh! strew the path with flowers,  
Banish grief and woe;  
Think how transient are the hours  
Given to man below!

To-day the boy in beauty's bloom  
Dances gaily by,  
Ere to-morrow on his tomb  
The cypress-wreath may lie.

See at morn the joyous bride  
Plight those vows so dear;  
Ere the dews of eventide  
She rests upon her bier.

To the winds with care and woe!  
Why our lot upbraid?  
Let the sparkling goblet flow  
Beneath the linden-shade.

Let unmark'd no nightingale  
Pour music on the breeze,  
Nor leave unheard in wood and vale  
The merry hum of bees.

Taste the joys which heaven bestows,  
The wine-cup and the kiss,  
Till death his dart un-erring throws  
To rob us too of this.

Though the roses on our tomb  
Rich in beauty glow,  
Can they breathe their sweet perfume  
On the dust below?

There is hush'd the joyous lute;  
There no chaplets wave;  
There the merry song is mute  
In the silent grave!

#### DRINKING-SONG.

A very Paradise of bliss  
We owe to father Rhine.  
Sweet I confess a gentle kiss,  
But sweeter rosy wine.  
When I but see the table spread  
And glasses brightly gleam,  
As lightsome as a fawn I tread  
That dances by the stream.

What matters all the world to me  
When bright the bowl is gleaming,  
And the rich juice I love to see  
Ripe at my lip is streaming?  
Then, like the Gods, the flask I drain  
With purple mantling o'er;  
The fire runs swift through every vein;  
I drink, and ask for more.

This world were but a vale of woe,  
Of whim and gout and grief,  
If noble Rhine-wine did not flow  
A source of sure relief;

That lifts the beggar to the throne,  
Annuls both Heaven and Earth,  
Gives an Elysium of its own  
To all of mortal birth.

'Tis the true panacea, 'tis plain;  
The old man's blood it fires;  
It frights away each ache and pain  
And hope and youth inspires.  
Long live the fair and blissful land  
That grows the rosy wine,  
And long live he whose skillful hand  
Planted and propp'd the vine!

And every pretty little lass  
Who plucked the grape I ween,  
To her a full and brimming glass  
I dedicate as Queen!  
So long live every German bold  
Who still his Rhine-wine drinks,  
So long as he the glass can hold  
Then down to earth he sinks!

These songs have been criticised as breathing a spirit too much akin to that of ancient Paganism which, seeing nothing beyond the grave, urged its votaries to enjoyment as a duty. True, Hoelty blends earthly and eternal bliss, and even while pointing out the uncertainty of existence still bids us quaff the cup of pleasure to the dregs. But we must remember the peculiarity of his temperament in which the love of earth was closely mingled with that of Heaven. Had his life been spared, his religious feelings would probably have assumed a calmer and loftier tone—he would have enlarged more on the duties of life and less on its pleasures.

About the spring of 1775 Hoelty began to spit blood, and his physicians, as the only chance of recovery, ordered change of air and complete rest. He accordingly removed to Hannover where, though with infinite regret, he renounced for a while his beloved studies and devoted all his care to the restoration of his failing health. But it was too late. The progress of the disease was indeed arrested for a moment; but it returned with re-doubled violence, and in the winter of the same year he expired at the age of twenty-eight. His poems, which had hitherto appeared only in the "Musen-Almanach", were published in a collected form in 1783, together with a brief biographical notice by his friend Voss. As a poet, Hoelty as we have seen is wanting in all the higher attributes of genius; but there are both grace and tenderness in many of his verses, while others are sparkling with mirth and gladness. His muse is seldom rich or original; but it is in general light, flowing and melodious, and his verses continue favourites among his countrymen. Most of them are set to music, for which they are peculiarly fitted.

Claudius, or the "Wandsbecker Messenger", as he was called, plays no mean part in the literary history of his day. His poems indeed, like those of Hoelty, are remarkable for their exceeding sweetness, and like his have been mostly set to music. His life was utterly un-eventful, and happier than those who offer a more fruitful theme to the novelist or the biographer, glided away in peaceful and virtuous tranquillity.

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## CHAPTER VIII.

### BÜRGER.

HIS CHILDHOOD AND HOME.—POETICAL TENDENCIES.—UNIVERSITY LIFE.—FOLLIES.—DISSIPATION.—SUFFERINGS.—REPENTANCE.—CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE "MUSEN-ALMENACH".—APPOINTMENT AS SUPERINTENDANT TO COUNT ULTEN.—POEMS: "LEONORE", "DER WILDE JÄGER".—ACQUAINTANCE WITH DORA AND MOLLY.—MARRIAGE.—PRIVATE LIFE.—UNHOLY PASSION.—SINS.—SORROWS.—DEATH OF DORA.—SECOND MARRIAGE.—REMOVAL TO GÖTTINGEN.—DEATH OF MOLLY.—DESPAIR.—ROMANTIC LOVE-TALE.—ELISA.—THIRD MARRIAGE.—MELANCHOLY RESULTS.—SEPARATION.—ILLNESS.—DEATH.—OBSERVATIONS.

ONE of the most influential members of the Hainbund was John George Bürger whose "Leonore" and "Wild Huntsman", translated by our own great novelist and poet, are almost as well known in England as in Germany, and whose life is scarcely less replete with romance than his verses. Of all the writers we have yet enumerated, Bürger certainly possessed, in the highest degree, many of the elements of the true poet; fervour of imagination, power and passion which carry away the reader, whether he will or no, an ex-

quisite melody of versification and at times a pathos at once solemn and touching. "The best criticism", says Frank Horn, "is that of the German people at large; they know his poems by heart." (1)

In many a cottage indeed on a winter's evening, the traveller may still hear "The Leonore", "The wild Huntsman" or the "Lied vom braven Mann" repeated in solemn tones by some verse-loving peasant, while wife or daughters stop the busy wheel—that wheel still plied in Germany—to listen to the thrilling strain.

But Bürger's mind was deficient in those qualities which alone can give true elevation to poetry. His fancy was incapable of long and sustained flights, and his compositions are generally unequal, and occasionally coarse and vulgar. From this censure we must except his sonnets, which, according to high authority, (2) are superior to any in the German language. "He stands", observes Hildebrandt. "at the very threshold of modern German literature like a star, brilliant indeed, but which, troubled in its course by clouds and mist, was never able to shine forth with perfect lustre. He was a memorable example of the fatal influence ever exercised by dissipated habits and want of principle even over the loftiest genius." (3)

Bürger first saw the light at Halberstadt in Prussia, January 1<sup>st</sup> 1748 at the very moment when the bells

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(1) Horn, *Poesie und Veredelsamkeit der Deutschen*. Berlin 1833.

(2) Wilmar, *Geschichte der deutschen Literatur*, 5. Ausgabe.

(3) Hildebrandt, *Geschichte der deutschen Literatur von Lessing bis auf die Gegenwart*.



were pouring forth their merry peal to welcome in the New-year. In his childhood he displayed no extraordinary abilities. At school he was noted only as a sad idle boy; for though passionately fond of reading, when he could procure any books to his liking, the study of Latin and arithmetic wearied him beyond all endurance. On reviewing his past life, he himself often expressed astonishment at the varied knowledge he had contrived to accumulate. It seemed, as he said, to have collected itself without giving him any trouble. So admirable, indeed, were his powers of retention that, when any thing pleased him, he required to read it once or twice only to remember it word by word. This very facility was a misfortune rather than an advantage; for it induced him to regard industry and study as absolutely unnecessary. At an early age, his poetical temperament displayed itself in his love of solitude, of the beauties of nature, of the song of birds, of the murmur of the stream, of the whistling of the autumn-wind among the leaves, and all those sights and sounds which have a thousand charms to the poetic soul. He loved to wander forth when school was over, and climb a hill which lay near his father's dwelling, crowned by a few old oaks, where, stretched full-length on the grass, he would watch the rays of the declining sun steal through the branches and gild the leaves with that exquisite light no pencil can pourtray. Often would he linger till the shades of night had fallen around him, although certain of a severe reprimand and perhaps punishment on his return; for his father, an excellent but thoroughly prosaic man, saw in these idle rambles, as

he called them, nothing but sheer waste of time, and could not understand what pleasure there could be in lying for hours beneath the trees gazing upward to the sky. When, in addition to these truant habits, young Bürger actually composed verses at the moment he ought to have been studying grammar, the parental indignation knew no bounds. Seizing the luckless papers, he threw them into the fire, declaring that the boy would be good for nothing hereafter. Unfortunately the course he adopted was but too well calculated to insure the fulfilment of his own prediction. To a character like Bürger's the forbidden fruit was sure to become doubly precious, and the only result of his father's conduct was to render both his studies and his domestic circle hateful to him.

That Bürger's home was not a happy one is tolerably evident. His father was a man of considerable acquirements, upright and honourable; but he loved his pipe and his glass of beer too well to sacrifice one quarter of an hour's enjoyment of these luxuries to the education or instruction of his son. His mother was endowed with no common abilities, but so little cultivated that she could scarcely write intelligibly, and her headstrong and violent temper rendered their domestic life by no means a tranquil one. The serene and humanizing influence of a gentle and affectionate mother was wanting. His parent's resources were likewise extremely limited, and this naturally contributed to embitter his mother's character.

At the age of twelve, Bürger was sent by his maternal grandfather to a school at Aschersleben, where he made some progress in his classical

studies. His love of poetry, far from diminishing, increased to such a degree that it became the engrossing object of all his thoughts to the detriment of more serious studies, and every spare moment was devoted to verse-making. A fragment of one of the productions called the "Fire" has been preserved, and it presents that harmony of versification for which Bürger's poems were always so remarkable. Well would it have been for him had he limited himself to such inoffensive productions; but that love of satire which in later life made him so many enemies had already begun to develop itself, and the peculiar form and shape of the wig of one of the monitors having unluckily attracted his attention, he composed an epigram which soon circulated through the school, and so excited the rage of the individual satirised that a violent quarrel ensued.

The head-master interfered, investigated the matter, and inflicted on the delinquent a punishment so severe and so disproportioned to the offence, that his grand-father not only withdrew him from the school, but brought an action against the master who was compelled to make a sort of apology.

Bürger was now sent to the Gymnasium at Halle where, though he frequently got into disgrace with the superior authorities, his wit, good humour and kind heart made him a general favourite. In 1754 he was entered at the University to study theology, his grand-father having destined him for the church. Any profession less suited to the ardent temperament and fiery character of the youth it is scarcely possible to conceive. But he was entirely dependent on

his grand-father's bounty and was forced to submit to his will. To the University therefore he went. At the very outset of his academical career he made the acquaintance of a man who, by his graceful manners, his cultivated intellect, soon acquired a powerful influence over his mind. Unhappily, the morality of this new friend was of the most lax description, and Bürger, already but too much inclined to sensual enjoyments and utterly destitute of those powers of self-control, so necessary to all, so doubly necessary to one of strong passions and ardent imagination, plunged head-long into the follies and dissipations of college life. His slender means were soon exhausted, and he contracted debts he found it impossible to discharge. Yet, despite the lamentable excesses into which he suffered himself to be beguiled, his time was not utterly wasted. He read much, but without end or aim, and wandered, amid the by-ways of literature without ever fixing on or following any definite path. At length, the manner in which his time was spent reached the ears of his grand-father. The old man's indignation may be conceived. He instantly recalled him home, and for some time treated him with coldness, and even severity, threatening to withdraw altogether his support and protection. But the affection he really felt for the young prodigal, and the charm which Bürger exercised over him, as well as over every one with whom he came in contact, subdued his anger, and he not only consented to his proceeding the following year to continue his studies at Göttingen, but yielded to his entreaties that he might exchange theology for juris-

prudence, convinced probably how very little chance there was of his doing much honour to the cloth. At Göttingen Bürger for awhile appeared, resolved to atone for the past by regular conduct and persevering industry. But the same fatal influence, which had led him into vice and dissipation at Halle, followed him here.

With culpable weakness Bürger had continued to cultivate the acquaintance of the man who had been the primary cause of all his errors. Unfortunately the stepmother of that very person resided at Göttingen. Bürger of course visited her, became an *habitué* at her house which was frequented by a set of profligates and spend-thrifts. Enticed by their persuasions and example his good resolutions soon began to falter. Little by little, he suffered himself to be drawn into follies and excesses still grosser than those into which he had already fallen and which acted no less fatally on his mental, than on his moral character. True, in moments of remorse, and these moments were many, he would shut himself in his chamber, seize his books, apply himself with feverish energy to his long-neglected studies, and closing the door against his worthless companions, vow henceforth to begin a new and better career. But after a brief period, solitude became utterly insupportable to him, accustomed as he was to excitement of the most baneful description, and he would rush forth in search of the vivid emotions now essential to his very existence. Ere long his conduct again came to the knowledge of his grand-father. He had pardoned him once, a great deal for a man of

his stern and rigid character. This time he was implacable. He withdrew his protection, despite all entreaties and promises of amendment, and Bürger was left to his own resources, in other words, without any resources at all. Shunned by all those of his former friends who had any reputation to lose, his condition seemed almost desperate. "It needed", observes one who afterwards became his best and most intimate friend, "a thorough knowledge of the excellent qualities which lay concealed beneath this mass of faults and follies, to induce any one to seek or rather to prevent their avoiding him at that moment."<sup>(1)</sup>

To the want of means to obtain even the necessities of life, to the contempt of some and the indignation of others, was added the terrible consciousness that his fate was only too well merited. Many would have sunk beneath such a load of deserved misery and opprobrium; but Bürger, though keenly alive to the general obloquy, and still more to the stings of self-reproach which weighed so heavily on him, had a natural buoyancy of temper, which saved him from despair. He had greatly erred; but he felt within his own soul that he was not lost beyond the power of redemption, and luckily for him there were others who felt it too. Among these was a man who, though himself utterly devoid of real poetic talent, was yet destined to exercise an important influence on the literature of his country. With a highly cultivated mind, thoroughly acquainted with his own and foreign

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(1) Lebensbild von Bürger, von seinem Arzt Althoff.

literature, active, ardent and energetic, yet calm, temperate and persevering, Boie seemed formed to animate the exertions of others and to call forth that productive talent in which he was himself deficient. His kindness of heart, his active benevolence we have already had occasion to notice in the biography of Voss. He had assisted struggling virtue, he now stretched forth his hand to save repentant sin. He had known Bürger when he first appeared at the university; like every one else, he had been charmed by his pleasing manners, and with his usual clear-sightedness had discerned beneath a gay and careless exterior the germ of those talents of which the possessor himself perhaps was ignorant. Some lines which, on one occasion, he had sent a friend requesting the restitution of a great-coat, had met the eye of this keen critic, and, trivial as was the subject, had given him a high idea of the capabilities of the writer. Touched by Bürger's youth, moved by his sufferings and his remorse, he generously afforded him the means of rising from the depths of misery into which he had sunk, and of re-instating himself in the opinion of his friends, by offering to admit him as a contributor to the "Musen-Almanach", besides affording him more immediate aid. Bürger most thankfully accepted the proposal, and the well-known song "*Herr Bacchus ist ein braver Mann*", which appeared in 1771, proved that Boie's favourable opinion had not been unfounded. This poem excited considerable attention. Its melody of versification, its sparkling gaiety rendered it popular at every banquet, and it rapidly became the favourite song of the Göttingen students. In 1771, Bürger ac-

quired a new and most valuable friend in the excellent Gleim who visited Göttingen. The indulgent sympathy shown him by one so estimable, so revered, deeply touched his heart, and inspired him with a gratitude and affection which ended only with his life. The dark clouds which had so long hung over his destiny seemed at length to melt away, and better days appeared in store. His poetic talents were acknowledged and admired. He was enabled by the products of his pen, small as they were, to discharge the most pressing of his debts and to provide for his daily wants. The friendship and patronage of Boie had raised him both in his own esteem and that of others. Penetrated with the sense of kindness so unhopèd for and so unmerited, he resolved to abandon at once and for ever those vices and follies which had brought him to the brink of ruin, and this time he kept his vow. Great as were his future errors, profligacy and extravagance in the common sense of the word cannot be reckoned among them.

He now sedulously devoted himself to the study of modern languages, and soon became sufficiently master of French, Italian and Spanish as to read them without the slightest difficulty. The two latter languages were his peculiar favourites, and their ballad-poetry was the model on which he formed his own.

He wrote much, and submitted all his verses to his friend Boie to whose hints and corrections he bowed with grateful docility, a rare quality in an author. It must not be supposed that the exquisite sweetness which forms the great charm of Bürger's compositions, was attained without effort. The natural cor-



rectness of his ear, indeed, would have prevented his writing any thing harsh or unmusical; but the perfect melody of his lines was the result of frequent and careful revision, of which, however, no trace can be discovered.

In 1773 appeared the "Nachtfeier der Venus" and his "Ode to Hope" and several other poems, distinguished more by the charm of their versification and by a certain glow of youthful enthusiasm than by merits of a higher order. His name had now emerged from obscurity; still it was far from being widely known, and he was generally regarded rather as an agreeable verse-maker than as gifted with real poetical genius. He had, however, been admitted a member of the "Bund", and had thus formed intimacies with all the rising talent of the day. Hoelty on his arrival at Göttingen sought his acquaintance, and his friendship was courted by many who, but a little while before, had shunned and disdained him. His pecuniary circumstances indeed were still at a very low ebb when his indefatigable friend Boie procured him the offer of the post of Ober-Intendant to the estates of a certain Count Usler. It was evident, indeed, that such a position, in a little village far from all intercourse with literary society, dependent on a stern and haughty noble who, imbued with all the aristocratic prejudices of his rank and time, looked down with contempt on Bürger, both as a plebeian and a poet, was but little fitted for a man of so ardent an imagination, so enthusiastic a love of social enjoyment. But Bürger's situation did not admit of much fastidiousness. Here he could find at least a refuge from the necessities that still

pressed so heavily on him and leisure to devote himself to the task in which he was now engaged, a translation of Homer—at that time still a desideratum in the German language—that of Voss not appearing till many years afterwards. One difficulty, however, yet remained to be overcome; it was necessary to give a certain sum of money as security for honesty and good behaviour, and where was this to be procured? Here an unexpected aid presented itself.

Bürger's grand-father, who although he had withdrawn his aid from his grand-son, had not been able to banish him completely from his heart, having learnt the amendment in his habits, and that he was on the eve of obtaining a useful and respectable position if the sum above-mentioned could only be obtained, offered to supply it. But here Bürger was destined to endure the inevitable results of a lost reputation. The old man, notwithstanding his nephew's reformation, did not feel sufficient confidence in his powers of self-control to entrust him with so considerable an amount. Boie was absent, and in a fatal moment, he placed the money in the hands of a man who, by his apparent friendly feeling and amiable manners had conciliated his esteem, and who though himself in desperate circumstances, had the skill and cunning to conceal his real condition and maintain an appearance of ease and comfort. He had, at a former period, occupied the very post now sought by Bürger, and enjoyed the Count's favour to a high degree. He resided in the village which was to be Bürger's future home, and he proposed that the young man should lodge in his house, and dine at his table,

for what seemed but a fair remuneration. All this seeming kindness, however, was only a cloak to obtain the money. Once in his hands, far from devoting it to the purpose for which it was intended, he made use of it for his own. It was not till long afterwards that Bürger discovered the treachery of which he had been the victim. The Count satisfied by the information that his grandfather had become surety for him, conferred upon him the desired post.

For a time matters seemed to go on smoothly enough. Bürger's duties, wearisome and uninteresting as they were, left much of his time at his own disposal, and the wild and solitary nature of the country that surrounded him, while fostering those sparks of superstition and melancholy so strangely interwoven with his nature, aided in developing his poetic genius. One fine moon-light night he was taking his accustomed stroll, when he overheard a peasant girl singing a wild old ballad popular enough in those days:

The moon it shines so brightly!  
The dead they ride so lightly!  
Sweet love, wilt ride with me?

The words, as they lingered on the evening breeze, struck Bürger so much that he could not banish them from his memory. They haunted him day and night, till at length he gave his visions form and shape in the first six verses of "Leonore", which so enchanted his friend Boie, to whom he communicated them, that he gave him no rest till he had completed the poem. This however was not the work of a moment. Bürger composed rapidly, but corrected very slowly; and it

was not till the following year that the "Leonore" appeared in the "Musen-Almanach".

Previously, however, to venturing on the publication of a production, so little in consonance with the established rules of art, Bürger rode over to Göttingen to read it to his friends there and to judge by its effect on them of the impression it would probably produce on the public mind. When he came to the line:

"Hurrah, wilt ride with me",

he struck the door with his whip. At the sound, Stolberg, who had been listening in wrapt attention, started up with every sign of terror. So deep was the impression made by the poem, that this unexpected noise had shaken him with fear, as though it really were the summons of a spectre from another world.

The success of the "Leonore" was as rapid as it was decided. It flew like lightning from one end of the land to the other; it was repeated alike in the palace and the cottage; the high-born lady pored over it at her morning-repast, and the village-gossips listened enchanted, while some peasant, more enlightened than the rest, read it aloud for the benefit of the assembly. Its mingled horror and tenderness, the wild unearthly strain that pervaded it, the rapid action, the sustained interest electrified every heart.

"Leonore", observes Schlegel, would itself insure Bürger an eternal renown had he written nothing else". Even Schiller who, in his rigid and lofty estimate of the qualities essential to a true poet, judged Bürger so severely, awards unhesitating praise to this production.

The reception of "Leonore" encouraged Bürger to new efforts, and the "Wilde Jäger" raised

him, for the moment at least, to the pinnacle of poetic fame. It would be difficult, indeed, to find in any language verses more thrilling, more impressed with deep and solemn meaning, than many portions of this really magnificent ballad. In the spirit-world Bürger was in his element. Nor was the fascination the "Wild Huntsman" exercised over all who read it the result of that love of the horrible inherent in the human mind. The poetic beauties are of the highest order. The conception is grand and original, the language picturesque and lofty, the verse exquisitely melodious, the moral admirable. It unites human interests with the ideal and fantastic. Once perused, it can never be forgotten; but Sir Walter Scott's masterly translation (in which however the last few stanzas are omitted) will be still too familiar to every reader to allow of our venturing to present another version.

Despite his poetic labours Bürger felt sad and lonely. The vision of domestic happiness and fire-side joys would often present themselves to his mind, decked in all the glowing colours which a vivid imagination lends to every object. The daughter of a village-official had for some time pleased and attracted him by her sweetness of character, her gentleness of manner and her household virtues. True he had little enough to support the expenses of a wife and family; but his rising fame seemed to promise better days, and his sanguine temper would not permit him to doubt of the future. Dora — such was the name of his intended bride — was about two-and-twenty. To be the wife of Bürger, of him whose name was at that

moment on every lip, seemed to her the very acmé of earthly happiness. His past follies and vices were probably unknown to her, or, if they had reached her ear, she regarded them only as youthful excesses long since past and forgotten. If at times a doubt would arise in her mind, whether a temperament so ardent, so thirsting for excitement, could be long happy in the lowly and secluded life to which, with his narrow means the additional burden of a wife and family would, for a lengthened period at least, condemn him, she cast it aside as vain and unthankful. With the fond credulity of a loving heart, she flattered herself that her tenderness, her devotion would supply the place of rank, wealth and society. Probably Bürger thought so too; at all events having resolved on this important step, he was anxious it should not be delayed, and the marriage was fixed for the ensuing summer.

We are now approaching a period of Bürger's life which it is impossible to contemplate without mingled regret, pity and indignation. We have followed him through the various stages of his chequered career, we have seen him in his wayward boy-hood, in his passionate youth; we have beheld him yielding to temptation, plunging into the wildest excesses, shunned by almost all his former friends, abandoned even by the protector of his infancy, on the very verge of destruction — held back by one helping hand alone, yet rising once more by the aid of that principle of good which yet remained intact within his soul, and by the innate force of his genius — and coming forth from the fiery ordeal apparently redeemed and puri-

fied. Since that period, he had renounced all his profligate acquaintances, all his dissipated habits, and had led a life as regular and virtuous as the most severe moralist could desire. He regarded his past follies with horror, and most sincerely desired to avoid them for the future.

But in Bürger's character the principle of self-control was utterly wanting. He was safe only when removed from seduction, and unhappily that very event which seemed to promise him security from perils such as had beset his earlier years, was destined to plunge him into new and more terrible temptation. Dora had a sister, several years younger than herself, who happened to be absent at the moment when Bürger was first introduced to his intended bride. She returned home only a day or two before the wedding, and flew to congratulate her sister and her future brother-in-law. She was but just fifteen, on the threshold of womanhood,

"Standing with reluctant feet  
Where the brook and river meet —  
Womanhood and childhood sweet,"

mingling with the innocent mirthfulness of the child, the softer graces of the maiden. With a heart overflowing with passionate tenderness, an imagination ardent and romantic, Molly was the very incarnation of that loveliness which had so often floated before Bürger's fancy, but which he had never even hoped to behold realized in a living and breathing form. He beheld her, and his fate, as he himself declared many long years afterward was decided. He felt that he loved as he had never loved before, that his inclination for

Dora—at no time very passionate—had faded like a baseless vision before a single glance of those too seducing eyes. “When”, he says in the letter alluded to, “I stood beside Dora at the altar, I bore already within my heart the most ardent love for the sister who was still a child. I felt that well; but from unacquaintance with my own heart, I held it as a mere passing fancy which would soon disappear. Could I but have cast one glance upon the fearful future, it would have been a duty to step back even at the altar ere the final blessing was pronounced.”

It would indeed; but he did not step back. In a fatal hour he accepted the fond young heart which had bestowed itself in all the confiding love of woman to his care, and swore before the altar of God to cherish and protect it. His friends, Stolberg, Hahn and Hoelty, who had been present at the ceremony surrounded him with congratulations and good wishes; and in the hurry and excitement of the wedding-feast and the departure which ensued, the wild emotions, the secret dark foreboding of that eventful moment were forgotten. (1)

Bürger fixed his residence in the little village of Wilmershausen, which was conveniently situated for the discharge of his duties as attendant of the Count's estate. His whole life was devoted to his young charge, and he was careful of keeping his mind from wandering to the future, following in the footsteps of his friends. He pursued a beneficial and happy life, and his life was full of consolations, especially



from the classic tongues, were then looked on in a very different light from that in which they are now regarded, and Bürger hoped by this work to obtain, if not an independence, at least a more suitable position; but the appearance of Voss's version at once put an end to his labours. He felt that his was now useless and threw it aside in disgust, unjust in this to himself; for the portion that has been preserved is superior, as might naturally be expected to Voss's in ease, vigour and melody, although in verbal strictness the latter is to be preferred.

The first year of Bürger's married life passed, if not in perfect happiness, at least in peace and content. Molly was residing beneath her father's roof. He had not seen her since his marriage. His wife had presented him with a daughter, and the mother was naturally rendered dearer by the child. All seemed to promise well for the future, when his father-in-law's sudden death compelled him to offer the friendless Molly an asylum beneath his roof. Young, innocent, utterly unsuspecting the fatal passion she had inspired, the maiden gladly accepted the proffered home, and Dora, fully confiding in her husband's affection, never even dreamt that, in opening her arms to her orphan sister, she was destroying her own peace for ever. Bürger's principal biographer <sup>(1)</sup> gives but few details respecting the domestic life of his hero. With the tender consideration natural to a friend, he touches but lightly on a theme which must so deeply affect his reputation

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(1) Dr. Uthoff.

both as a man and a Christian. He does not tell us by what insensible gradations his love, never wholly eradicated, acquired fresh strength and violence; how gradually all the ties that bound him to the wife he had sworn to cherish lost their holy character in his sight; how at last, carried away by the breath of passion, he trampled on all that the heart of man should hold most sacred, and became a seducer and an adulterer. Almost equally silent is the friendly biographer as to the sentiments and conduct of the unhappy object of his guilty love. More than once, it would appear, her better angel had come to her aid, urging her to leave a roof which threatened to be fatal alike to her peace and her honour. But passion triumphed alike over conscience and reason, and she sank at last into an abyss of guilt, at the very thought of which she would once have shuddered. What must have been the feelings of the injured wife when she beheld the man on whom she doated, for whom she had rejected many a more favourable proposal not only abandon her, but offer up his devotions at her sister's shrine, that sister whom she had educated, watched over, cared for from her infancy, with all a mother's tenderness, for whom she had never shunned any sacrifice, any suffering. <sup>(1)</sup>

That Dora early became sensible of her husband's baneful passion is generally allowed; that under these circumstances she should have not only permitted her sister to remain beneath her roof, but even yielded

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(1) *Leben von Bürger, von Döring.*

up all her own conjugal rights, seems scarcely credible: yet so convincing is the evidence that doubt is impossible. In any other woman, this inexplicable conduct might be ascribed to coldness or indifference. Bürger himself not unnaturally—for how could *he* comprehend such deep though mistaken self-devotion—gave it this interpretation. <sup>(1)</sup> It is evidently a false one—Dora's whole existence was bound up in her husband.

But whatever the motive, there can be but one opinion as to the morality of the proceeding and its probable result. This sacrifice, like all which trench upon the sacred claims of duty, failed in its intent. It saved one pang to inflict a thousand. Dora's position, was, it is true, the most painful that imagination can conceive. She knew—too late—her husband's nature. She dreaded lest, deprived of the being he so madly adored, he should either die of despair or end his life by suicide. She had no friend, no counsellor—none to whom she could turn for aid or for advice. At one time she resolved to consult the pastor of the village; but she naturally shrunk from giving shape and form in words to a secret so horrible. There was but one being to whom she could confide it—to Him who knows the inmost depths of every heart. His Word—had she consulted it, could have pointed out the course which, painful and thorny as it was, might yet have rescued her and those she loved from sin and shame, and His Word alone. The purest precepts of morality were insufficient here, as

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(1) Brief an Eliza. Althoff's Leben von Bürger.

- they always will be when doubts and difficulties and contending passions assail the human heart. But Dora had not been sufficiently impressed with the great lesson that every human affection, every human consideration, must yield before the strict unalterable law of duty and of God. She saw only her husband's grief; she dreaded only her husband's sufferings, perhaps his hatred, and with mistaken, but still touching resignation, she bowed down before what seemed to her an inevitable fate.

But though their guilty flame was unopposed, who can believe that Bürger or Molly were happy? His letter to Boie, written so many years later, sufficiently proves the contrary. He speaks of his "life withered in its bloom", of her "blighted youth", of their mutual anguish, of his deep and constant remorse; nor could it be otherwise. Keenly alive to all that was good and great, with a mind peculiarly sensitive to the stings of reproach, though too weak to pursue the path by which he could have escaped them, what must have been his sufferings during those ten long years! As to Molly, we scarcely dare to think of her. She is pictured, not only by Bürger, but by all who knew her, as the ideal of every grace and virtue.<sup>(1)</sup> When such a being could sink into this abyss of sin who shall venture to deem themselves secure in their unaided strength? How terrible must have been her struggles ere she yielded, how fearful her remorse when she had fallen. What must have been her feelings, when gazing on the drooping form

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(1) Döring, *Leben von Bürger*. Dasselbe von Dr. Althoff.

of her too confiding sister, who had welcomed her with a mother's tenderness to her lowly roof, and whom she beheld fading beneath the weight of hopeless sorrow, sorrow not the less deep, because endured with the patience of a martyr. At moments, overwhelmed with repentant anguish, she would fling herself into Dora's arms and weep upon her bosom the burning tears of a guilty but contrite heart; then rush wildly from the chamber to bury herself in solitude, and make vows of penitence and self-sacrifice, to be broken at the first look or word of her lover. At one time summoning up all her strength, she determined to tear herself away; but his prayers, his anguish over-came her faltering courage—She remained and fell. The well-known elegy "to Molly when she would have torn herself from me" expresses all the depths of Bürger's despair at the prospect of losing her. Generally speaking, we are apt to fancy that flowing numbers are not the real out-pourings of a broken heart, and to suspect the truth and fervour of those emotions, which instead of seeking the shade, court the light of day and parade themselves to public view. But there are some, to whom verse is as natural a language as the song to the nightingale; who from childhood "have lisped in numbers for the numbers came", and we know too well how often, minds of a certain cast find relief in making their sufferings known, and satisfaction in feeling that they are the objects of general interest. Nor is this to be wondered at when, like Bürger, their own domestic circle is narrow and confined, their lot uncongenial, and

their genius little appreciated by those to whom their daily intercourse is confined. His anguish, at all events, was neither feigned nor exaggerated, and his verses were the effusions of an ill-guided, but warm and passionate heart, as a few extracts will sufficiently prove.

Dare I breathe a word of sadness,  
Dare I let a single tear  
Fall in this dark hour of madness  
To retain thy footsteps here!

. . . . .

Shall I blame, shall I upbraid thee,  
In thy purpose high and brave?  
Let my lay sustain and aid thee  
Though it drag me to the grave.

. . . . .

At the thought my conscience thrilling  
Tells me truly thou must go;  
Yes! my better self is willing;  
But my strength is faint and low.

. . . . .

As the wretched captive, groaning  
In his dungeon's gloomy night,  
Thus my soul is darkly moaning,  
Vainly seeking hope or light.

. . . . .

Conscious of my guilt, despairing,  
Torn with anguish, all too late  
Nor complaint nor murmur daring,  
Yet I cannot yield to fate.

. . . . .

Art thou really lost for ever?  
 Power nor human nor divine  
 Shall those links so precious sever,  
 Which unite thy being to mine.

. . . . .

One evening the sisters were sitting together in their little sitting-room, engaged in some domestic duties. It was evening, and twilight was slowly creeping over the scene. Both felt embarrassed, yet neither liked to quit the apartment, when Molly, to break the silence, placed herself at the piano and began to pour forth some of those "wood-notes wild" which Bürger so loved to hear. Gradually it grew dark, so that she did not perceive Bürger who had crept in, listening delightedly to her strain. Silently approaching the instrument, he clasped the singer in his arms and imprinted a fervent kiss on her cheek. "That is our last kiss", said a sad broken voice as the form he had embraced quitted the room. It was Dora, who as her sister rose had, unobserved by her husband, taken her place. It was their last kiss.<sup>(1)</sup>

How such a state of things could continue so long, at least among individuals not wholly lost to all sense of decency and morality, without bringing about some fearful catastrophe, it is difficult to conceive. During the latter years of her sad existence Dora, indeed, seems to have sunk into a kind of apathy which rendered her almost insensible to all that was going on around her. But the most extraordinary part of the

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(1) Nachlaß aus Bürger's Leben. Leipzig 1791.

affair is that, although his unhallowed connexion with Molly, if not exactly known, was at all events pretty generally suspected, it excited little comment. No one seems to have shunned or reproached him. His friends appear to have regarded it as completely a domestic affair. If his wife was satisfied, what did it matter to the rest of the world? Such a view of the subject is incomprehensible, especially in a land celebrated, and at one time at least not undeservedly, for its domestic virtues. There were moments when, roused to the consciousness of the abyss that lay before him, Bürger resolved to fly the peril; at least so we should judge from the following sonnet written about this period.

To wean my heart from that beloved maid  
To whom it clings, 'mid anguish, grief and pain,  
I try each art; but try alas! in vain,  
And summon dreams of beauty to my aid.

At length the hues by fervid fancy wove  
Evoke a form of loveliness and light;  
Smiling in pity, as an angel bright;  
To her in Molly's stead I turn my love.

I clasp the phantom to my glowing breast,  
Devote my every thought to her alone,  
And fancy Molly's image thence has flown.  
Oh! vain delusion! little space of rest!  
For, as I gaze, that form is all her own,  
'Tis hers! my heart's first, last, and only guest.

But these good resolutions were but transitory, while in general he scarcely attempted to conceal his pas-



sion. The well-known sonnet "*für Sie mein Alles!*" breathes a passionate devotion which would be touching, were it not desecrated by the unhallowed nature of the sentiment which inspired it.

## FOR HER MY ALL.

Heaven has not made me either Prince or King  
Or Baron high, or proud and noble Lord;  
I have no heritage, nor wealth, nor sword,  
Nor have I quaff'd from fortune's golden spring.

No monarch e'er has cast a favouring eye  
And stoop'd to raise me from my low estate.  
Against me have conspir'd both man and fate;  
Repuls'd is every wish, and every sigh.

Yes! from my cradle even to my grave  
One trophy only can I claim as mine,  
A wreath of laurel o'er my tomb to wave;  
Yet e'en this single boon would I resign,  
This sacrifice—the mightiest—would I brave,  
For one brief hour, beloved, to call thee mine!

Meanwhile Bürger's worldly affairs far from prospering became more and more hopelessly entangled. An increasing family, the declining health of his unhappy wife, all combined to render his position painfully embarrassing. He had endeavoured to obtain the post his father-in-law had filled and which was more lucrative than his own, but in vain. In 1778, he published his "Collected Poems"; they added to his fame, but did little to better his pecuniary condition, and at length in despair he resolved to turn for preferment

to another quarter and addressed a petition to Frederick the Great, representing his condition and entreating some employment suited to his abilities. Of all the monarchs of Germany, none had certainly exhibited less inclination to patronize her literature than Frederick. He regarded it, in general, both ancient and modern with sovereign scorn, as his absolute refusal to admit the "Nibelungen" into the royal library and his contemptuous question to Gellert "why have we no authors in Germany?" sufficiently prove. All the writers of that period, even Gleim, so enthusiastic in his admiration for Frederick, as a king and a warrior, united, as we have seen, in lamenting the low estimation in which he held the intellect of his native land. Here therefore there seemed very little hope. Yet, for an instant it appeared as though Bürger had not been mistaken. Frederick, little as he liked German poetry in general, was still alive to the inspiration of real genius in whatever form it might display itself, so long as (to use his own expression) he could make it out. The "Leonore", the "Wild Huntsman", had probably thrilled the Monarch's soul, as well as that of his subjects; he read Bürger's petition and directed his chancellor to reply in favourable terms, promising he should be remembered at the first opportunity; but more pressing and more powerful suitors soon effaced the poet from Frederick's memory, and here as elsewhere, his hopes were doomed to disappointment. Finding no chance of assistance from others, Bürger determined to try what he could do for himself; he took a farm, commenced cultivating, draining, ploughing, with his

usual ardour; but utterly ignorant of the first principles of agriculture, and frequently too much engrossed with his poetical pursuits to devote that minute attention to the business which it required, it soon became a desperate speculation, and he found himself obliged to abandon it after losing several thousand thalers. Scarcely had he recovered the immediate effects of this calamity which consumed all the little sum he had inherited from his father-in-law, when an event occurred alike injurious to his prospects and inexpressibly painful to all his better feelings.

The Count Ulten, who had never shown much goodwill towards his superintendant, was induced by the representations of one of his enemies to accuse him not only of gross neglect and mismanagement, but of misdemeanours of a still more serious character, namely the appropriation to his own purposes of rents paid into his hands, as well as of the retention of the sum his grandfather had laid down as his security. To prove the falsehood of the latter charge, Bürger appealed to the individual with whom the funds had been lodged. What was his horror on receiving for reply, that they had long since been remitted into his own hands, and that he and he alone knew what had become of them. The grand-father was dead; no witness was forthcoming. The count refused to listen to his assertions and brought the matter before a court of justice. That Bürger had not always exhibited the strict attention and regularity essential to the due performance of his duties, and that the Count's affairs had suffered in conse-

quence is more than probable; but of malversation he was undoubtedly innocent and he triumphantly proved the falseness of the accusations, to the satisfaction of the court and the confusion of his enemies. The Count, as an atonement for his past injustice, would have retained him in his employment; but Bürger indignantly threw up the post notwithstanding the representations of his friends and family. He was now free—but almost a ruined man. Small as had been the remuneration he received from the Count, it had still sufficed for the daily wants of existence. But the remembrance of the humiliations to which he had been subjected was too keen to allow of his listening to reason.

Another circumstance likewise influenced his determination. A short time previous to the events just recorded, his wife, who for the last two years had been gradually sinking beneath the weight of declining health and domestic affliction, died. True to the part she had imposed upon herself through the whole of her married life, she did not utter one single reproach either to the husband who had betrayed, or to the sister who had injured her. Bürger's biographers give us no details as to her last moments; but, if we are to believe a work entitled "Bürger a poet's life", in which according to the authority of an able critic,<sup>(1)</sup> all the principal incidents are drawn from undeniable sources, the dying martyr called her erring husband and sister to her bed-side and placed their hands in each other. Still,

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(1) Geschichte der deutschen Literatur von Dr. Geijer. Vol. 2nd.

as neither the author himself, nor Dr. Gelzer indicate the authorities from which he draws these facts, we must accept it with caution.

However this may be, the sequel was such as may be supposed. It is true that for a while the stings of remorse and self-accusation re-awakened by the spectacle of a death occasioned more by the weight of concealed anguish, than of bodily illness, inspired both Bürger and Molly with thoughts of self-sacrifice and abnegation which, if carried out, might have gone far to redeem their past sin. But the effort was too mighty.

Bürger's love was too passionate to listen long to the voice of conscience which he had already so often stifled. Molly indeed quitted his roof for a time; but absence only seemed to increase their deep, though unholy love, and at the end of a twelve-month they were united in the ties of wedlock 1784. Bürger removed to Göttingen where by public lectures, private tuition, translations from foreign tongues &c. he hoped to obtain a provision for his family, and in time the appointment of professor of belles-lettres at the University with a fitting salary. The realization of the bliss for which he had so long vainly sighed, the undisputed possession of the being he had for ten long years adored with a passion, most criminal indeed, but most intense and unchanging, seemed to exercise a salutary influence on his mind, to re-animate his flagging genius and to lend it new life and vigour. The past, with its errors and its sufferings, seemed forgotten, and in the domestic happiness he now enjoyed, his life glided away without a care, almost

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without a thought. Lapped in a delicious day-dream of bliss, he fancied Heaven itself had forgiven his sin. His biographer, indeed, <sup>(1)</sup> has urged the depth, the truth, the enduring devotion of this passion as some palliation of its guilt. It was, as he tells us, his soul itself. In that one object every hope and thought and wish were centred. With her, privation, suffering were delight--without her, Paradise would have been a Hell. Her mere presence sufficed to give light and life to his existence. Endowed with that passionate temperament, so often the companion and when as here unrestrained by religion or morality, the curse of genius, bound to a woman, gentle and amiable indeed, but incapable of sympathising with those loftier aspirations which form so large a portion of the poet's existence, thrown into daily, hourly intercourse with a being so lovely, so seducing, condemned to the narrowest circumstances, the most incessant toil--may there not be some mercy extended to him if he sank beneath a temptation it would have needed the virtue of a Cato to resist? It must be owned that while reading Bürger's memoirs, while witnessing his sufferings, we are inclined to yield to these arguments. But a few minutes' reflection will prove the weakness of the plea. To betray the trust of a fond devoted wife, to seduce an innocent inexperienced girl scarcely sixteen confided to his care and that girl his sister-in-law, are actions which no force of passion can palliate. When he took Molly as an inmate of his home, when he placed her beneath the humble

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(1) *Leben von Bürger*, von Dr. Althoff.

thatch that sheltered his wife and child, he could not plead ignorance of the peril that menaced him; he had loved from the first moment he had beheld her. Though difficult, it was not impossible to procure her another home. Yet Bürger neither fled, nor resisted the temptation, and his remorse, though poignant enough to imbitter his existence, could not induce him even to seek to subdue his guilty love. That his position was melancholy must be at once acknowledged; that his wife was not in all respects a meet companion for his highly-wrought imaginative mind may also be conceded; but if restricted means, or incompatibility of character are to be admitted as excuses for vice, where shall we place the limits? Nor must Bürger's genius be pleaded as an apology. It is in proportion to the extent of our powers, that our responsibility will be reckoned. Far from claiming special immunity from common duties, Genius must expect to be measured by a loftier and severer standard than that applied to ordinary men. Yet we would not judge Bürger severely—We pity while we condemn. We know how difficult it is judge the extent of passions and temptations we have never experienced. We are like men standing calmly on the sea-shore and wondering at the madness of some poor wretch whose bark has stranded on the breakers.—There *are* excuses for Bürger, though not such as his defenders have brought forward. In his ill-directed childhood, in his unhappy home, in his absolute want of all religious or moral culture may be traced the cause of his errors and the only palliation we dare offer for sin like his.

Nor must we allow the glowing pictures drawn of her by her lover and her friends to blind us to Molly's guilt. In vain they plead, in extenuation, her excessive youth, her childish ignorance. In vain they bid us remember that, perpetually by Bürger's side — beguiled by the charm of his genius — the confidante of every thought and every feeling, she became so identified with his very existence that to tear herself away was beyond her strength. She was the sister of the injured wife; she owed her more than a sister's common love. She knew, if Bürger did not, how intense was that sister's sufferings, and she sinned alike against maiden-virtue, and fraternal affection, against the laws of God and man. But the hour of retribution was approaching. Even on earth, how often does the finger of the avenger overtake us when we expect it least. A year after their marriage Molly died in giving birth to a son. Bürger's grief was wild and passionate as his love, and for awhile he was in a state bordering on madness. "The partner of my soul", he writes, "she in whose existence were bound up my life, my strength, my all, she too, after an apparently happy confinement has died of a violent fever. Oh! brief possession of my highest earthly bliss! Words can express neither my deep and passionate love, nor the nameless agony in which my for ever widowed heart is plunged. God preserve every feeling soul from an anguish such as mine!"

Another letter to his friend Boie exhibits still more touchingly the depth of his love and his affliction:



10<sup>th</sup> March 1786.

“Many thanks, dearest B—, for your kind and sympathising letter. Real sympathy is ever a draught in which, if not healing, at least sweet refreshment for a wounded heart may be found, particularly when offered by so dear a hand as yours. I have hitherto been a poor, helpless man. I am so still and must ever remain so, till the grave, that grave I hope soon to share with my unforgotten one shall open for me. A man broken in health and spirits, unfit for every thing, weary of everything. Oh! you will say, with a hundred other consolers, that will yield to the influence of time. True amid all comforters time is the best; but all the consolation time can afford, it has already afforded me. When will the throng of recollections cease to surround my soul? When will they so fade away as no longer to pierce my heart with agony? Deep as was my love, even so deep is my despair. How can I forget her! Her for whom, during ten long weary years, full of constraint and suffering, I sighed with a longing to which every day only added new strength, for whom the youthful bloom of my mind and body have prematurely faded, who promised to restore that faded bloom, who at last was mine, mine own—word of bliss ineffable to me; who called me back from the night of death, and had begun to raise me to a heaven of light and love. And for what? So soon to vanish, to leave me on the threshold of a new and better existence, only to sink back more deeply than ever to my former darkness. Oh! I loved her so devotedly, so boundlessly, so inexpressibly, that my love to her

was not only the sole engrossing object of my heart, but my heart itself. How utterly am I now widowed, and for ever! Ah! Dear B—, it is not I alone who say it, she was one of the most charming of her sex. Could you but hear the united suffrage, even of the indifferent, you would find that not one word can be uttered to her prejudice. If ever the purest womanly soul displayed itself in the fairest of human forms, it was in her's. The sweet, if not brilliant beauty of her features, the graceful movement of her form, even the flute-like tones of her musical voice, everything about her in short, betrayed to all who were not utterly destitute of the sense of the beautiful, that she was indeed a child of heaven. If ever human being was originally sinless, it was she, and if, in the course of her whole life, she did one wrong action, the blame lay with me, with my ardent all-devouring passion. How would it have been possible to withstand this passion aided by a love as deep on her own side? And still she did resist — resist for years amid the strongest temptations, and at length yielded only in a way which left not a stain on the purest womanly innocence and chastity. In my madness, I would rather have renounced heaven itself than the bliss of her possession. I declare before God that gratification of the senses had the very smallest share in my boundless love. The Almighty will pardon for the sake of this, his darling, the sin I have committed in the vortex of passion. But what am I saying? Things that perhaps I ought not to have said, even to you. But you are the oldest, dearest of all my friends. And what, if I said it aloud to

the whole world? what is over is over, what is lost is lost. If I still wish or hope any thing on this side of the grave, it is only for the sake of my children. Weak and exhausted as I am, I still struggle on from morning till night for them alone. But for them, my only wish would be to sleep beside my lost one; the sooner the better. What avails it that the bare, black, melancholy stick should remain standing, when the grapes that once clustered round it are withered and gone?

As to my poems, I should scarcely ever touch them again, if I had not to interest myself for something more than my own wretched person. B— will inform you of the new edition I propose issuing. If you can do anything for me, I know you will without my asking. You may regard this edition as my last, as my will. My strength is gone. What yet remains, I will collect to honour the memory of my forgotten one. In no other way can I atone for the sorrow which my unhappy love caused her so many years in the spring-tide of existence. My pecuniary circumstances are endurable, though I have had heavy expenses this winter. They would once more have flourished, had I preserved my idolized wife, adorned as she was with every house-hold virtue, and with her my strength and courage. Now, on however humble a footing I have placed my domestic economy, I must still confide it to the hands of strangers. My eldest-born, the only girl by my first marriage, I have placed under the care of a very worthy woman to whom I am to pay so much a year for maintenance and education. The babe, the legacy of

my departed one, together with its nurse I have confided to the care of a kind sister-in-law. It is sad, indeed thus to be forced to separate my little flock from me. When shall I be able once more to gather them around me? I have just received letters from England, proposing that I shall take a young Englishman into my house and under my care. I am to fetch him from Brussels whither his father himself will conduct him, in about three weeks from this time. I trust the change will be of service to me. Farewell, my best friend. God bless you and your dear wife, and grant you all that happiness which I once so fervently implored for myself".

It is impossible to peruse this letter without feelings of the deepest pity for the unhappy writer; but it must be owned that the father who could confide a son to Bürger's care, must have been singularly ignorant of his history. The following Sonnets written when his anguish had become somewhat less poignant attest its depth and sincerity:

#### LOVE WITHOUT A NAME.

My wearied heart, e'en like the tender dove  
By cruel falcons chased from nest to nest,  
Dreamt it had found at length a place of rest  
Amid the embow'ring leaves, wov'n by the hands of love.

Alas! poor bird! Alas! mistaken trust!  
Was there e'er fate so cruel and so drear?  
Scarce hadst thou reach'd that haven calm and dear,  
When lo! the lightning's bolt has hurled thee to the dust.

And now once more in lowliness and woe,  
Without an aim to tempt thy wings to soar,  
'Twixt heaven and earth thou wanderest to and fro;  
For such a heart as once throbb'd warm and pure  
And loved thee with a love most fond, most sure,  
On this sad earth will beat for thee no more.

## SUN-RISE.

When morning tints with rosy hues the skies  
I turn in anguish from the glorious sight;  
For there, amid those realms so pure, so bright,  
Dwells she for whom my aching bosom sighs.

Soon as the dews of evening gem the plain,  
Thy bride, Tythonius, at thy side will stand;  
But only in the dark and shadowy land  
Shall I embrace my best-belov'd again.

Thy bride, Tythonius, can thy youth renew,  
Shed o'er thy waning years the radiance bright  
Of her young beauty and its rosy hue;  
But unto me the stars lost all their light,  
The day itself became o'ercast with gloom,  
When Molly left me for the silent tomb.

These were not empty words; his health rapidly declined, till he became incapable of exertion either bodily or mental. "Constant suffering", he writes, "too often weighs down the natural activity of my mind with heavy fetters, and lames the impulse of head and heart, so that I feel as if I had neither life nor energy for anything on earth, nor any longing, save that, of all the worn and weary, to exchange this sad and melancholy existence for the quiet of the tomb."

But, like so many other sufferers whom death passes by, heedless of their prayers, while, in the inscrutable decrees of Providence, it strikes the happy and the healthy, Bürger continued to live on, though life had lost every charm. That mysterious consoler, time, effected something even for his worn and broken spirit. The kindness and sympathy of his many friends, who gathered anew around him, soothed and touched his heart. The attentive and crowded audiences who assembled to hear his lectures on critical philosophy, the praises every-where awarded to his poems—the title of Doctor, and about two years afterwards that of Professor-Extraordinary, granted him by the university, gratified the love of fame, which all his sorrows and sufferings had not wholly extinguished.

Five years had elapsed since the death of Molly. He had now a profession and an income, narrow indeed, but still sufficient, with care and economy, to provide for the simple wants of his family, and he became unspeakably anxious to have his children once more around him. Most did he long to clasp to his heart his last-born darling—the infant image of its hapless mother. Yet how was this to be effected without a third marriage? and from this thought he long recoiled with dismay. Its necessity however pressed itself upon him with daily augmenting force, and a circumstance which occurred at this period decided him to a step which seemed the only one to reunite his family beneath his roof.

Bürger's poems were peculiar favourites among the fair sex, and one of their warmest admirers was

a Suabian maiden, called Elisa H—. Young, ardent and romantic to excess, she had hung with rapture over Bürger's poems; she had listened with pitying sympathy to the recital of his love and his sorrows, and her imagination had pictured him under the most attractive form. Wayward and passionate, thoughtless and reflective, now gladsome as a child, now plunged into the depths of sadness—"every thing by turns and nothing long", Elisa was the most charming and the most provoking of her sex. Though far from wealthy, her position was at least independent, and her wit and beauty attracted numerous admirers. As none of her adorers had yet found favour in her eyes, probably because they fell short of the standard of excellence her imagination had formed, she was still unmarried and fancy-free, when the tidings of Molly's death reached her and awakened feelings which, at first, she herself scarcely dared to analyze. Bürger, he whose poems had been so long the delight of her heart, now thrilling her with terror, now moving her to tears, was free! That being whom he had so passionately loved was torn from him by the cruel hand of death, and as Elisa pictured his wild despair, his hopeless anguish, his utter loneliness, her enthusiastic soul warmed with mingled tenderness and pity. To see him—to know him—to console him, this was at first the sole end and aim of all her wishes. Gradually others arose—Might she not by her love and care reconcile him to that world which was now become a desert to him and replace his lost Molly in his heart? She did not pause to consider whether a union with a man double

her age, who had already twice entered the bonds of matrimony, would be likely to insure her happiness. She trusted to her charms, to her influence, to efface all remembrance of his beloved Molly and to mould him to her wishes, a delusion which has blasted the peace of many a fond heart. That the questionable nature of his moral character should not have made her hesitate, is but another proof of the fatal indulgence with which young and inexperienced women are apt to regard the faults and follies of the other sex.

For a considerable time Elisa kept her sentiments a profound secret, and Bürger, still absorbed in his regrets little dreamt how profound an impression he had made on the heart of the too susceptible girl. At length, one morning, about five years after Molly's death, a Suabian news-paper called the "Examiner" happened to fall beneath his eye, and to his amazement he beheld a copy of verses addressed to himself commencing thus:

"O Bürger, Bürger! noble man,  
Who pours forth lays as no one can  
Save thee, replete with fire  
And passion, lend me, to impart  
The thoughts that fill my glowing heart  
Thy poet's lyre."

The verses continued in the same strain and thus concluded:

"For if a thousand suitors came  
Laden with gold—to press their flame,  
And Bürger too were there,



I'd give him modestly my hand  
And gladly change my fatherland  
For thee! no matter where.

Then if again inclined to woo,  
Seek thee a Suabian maiden true,  
And choose me, I implore.  
With German soul and Suabian truth  
And all the generous warmth of youth  
I'll love thee evermore!

However small the poetical merit of this composition, it was too flattering not to command Bürger's attention and curiosity. At first indeed he only laughed at it, and called the writer a pretty enthusiast; but the incident made a deep impression on his ever susceptible heart, and once more awakened it to dreams of earthly happiness. Insensibly the image of the unknown writer blended itself with that which had hitherto engrossed his thoughts, and, almost unconsciously, he found himself mingling the two in his reveries till, at length, he resolved to learn something of his fair admirer, and for that purpose wrote to the Editor of the news-paper with whom he was personally acquainted, soliciting her portrait. This gentleman or his wife communicated the request to Elisa, and in a few days the wished-for portrait was in Bürger's hands. Nothing could be more opposed to Molly's soft and seraphic loveliness than the face now before him, with its rich lines, its raven locks, its dark sparkling eyes, every feature breathing fervour and passion. But Bürger was too sensible to female charms in all their forms not to be filled with admira-

tion at the sight of this bright and glowing countenance. Yet ere he sealed a union which must determine the happiness or misery of his future life, and that of the too-confiding being who offered him her hand, he explained in a letter the circumstances in which he was placed, and with deep humility and repentance acknowledged the errors of his past life.

"Dearest maiden", he writes, "fondly as I hope that you are the being destined to cheer the evening of my days, the being whom I so long despaired of finding upon earth, still duty admonishes me, by this true confession of my faults and foibles, to urge you to the strictest examination of your own feelings, ere you suffer your enthusiasm to lead you to a step which may involve us both in the deepest sorrow. I will endeavour so to depict both my inner and outer man, that, if possible, you may know me as well as I know myself. As to what regards my heart and mind, you may fancy you know them sufficiently already from my works; but you must not conclude that my soul is noble and stainless. It would be as if you were to suppose from the beauty of a few flowers that the tree that produces them is in a state of perfect healthiness. Even a worm-eaten and half-rotten stem, if originally of a good description, may bring forth some fair blossom. Now I fear much, that you and all who know me more intimately, will be compelled to regard me as such a withered tree. The storms and tempests of life have made sad havoc among my branches, leaves and blossoms. Oh! I am not what nature destined me to become, what I really should have become, if, in the

spring of life, a milder heaven had smiled on me, Through many and continued griefs and trials, I have become completely out of tune in mind and body. But as I naturally was more inclined to mirth than melancholy, I should certainly have glided back to my original character, had I retained the society of my adored Molly; for in the possession of her hand and heart I felt myself bloom and flourish anew, no less in wealth of mind, than in warmth and gladness of soul. Then these moods of sadness rarely oppressed me, and I believe the wife of my bosom never suffered from them. But after her departure how could I recover? Love indeed, but no common love, might perhaps give me completely new birth. But is such a love possible? A love so deep that it would consider it worth its while to re-tune and re-string an instrument so long disused and out of tune? And would the instrument reward the toil and trouble? Ah! in all that regards health of mind and body, what am I but a poor every-day being like thousands under God's heaven! I am often amazed how on account of a few good verses, an enlightened public can regard me as something extraordinary!

My compositions, both in prose and verse, flow slowly from their source. It is only a little taste and judgement that render what I write enduring. To the gift of gay, lively, witty conversation I have no pretensions except in my happiest and rarest moments, and then only to those who love me and find pleasure in my peculiar manner. To many my character and my sentiments may be worth more than my genius; still I am even less satisfied with the latter than with the former; for here I not only perceive

all in which I am wanting, all that is nobler and purer than myself; but I likewise feel that I might once have attained that perfection, if idleness, weakness and sensuality had not prevented my reaching it. Even in those points in which I am really better than others, I still cannot hold any very high opinion of myself; for as I am too little master of my inclinations to overcome them when it is necessary and to follow that course of virtue I so highly prize and admire, I am compelled to regard my really good qualities only as the result of temperament. For example, I do not think I am harsh, offensive, vindictive, quarrelsome or implacable. But why not? Because I consider all these things wrong and the contrary right? Ah! I really do so consider them; still that is not the reason why I practise one and avoid the other. It is only because my soft and idle nature loves quiet and repose. How many of my virtues may arise from vanity, egotism and the love of fame! . . . . .

To my habits and manners there is, I feel, still more to object. I am not a good house-keeper; not that I am inclined to extravagance, but because I am somewhat idle, thoughtless, and cannot take particular care of my money, or of my other worldly goods and chattels. Hence no one is more easily deceived than I am; for even if I perceive the deceit, it must be gross indeed ere I take any notice of it. Of pride and haughtiness, indeed, I have a tolerable share; at least when I meet with it in others. This would be well enough if I did not myself too often sin against the claims of society by neglecting to

acknowledge letters, pay visits, &c. As to what regards my manners and daily habits, a woman I loved would, I think, easily lead me to adopt any which were agreeable to her. Love would govern me as much or more than I can govern myself. I know not if it is to my credit, or not, to acknowledge that I should hardly resist slavery itself to the woman I loved. And now I come to the most fatal part of my confession; were I ten times as amiable in mind and manners, I am still neither young, handsome nor in good circumstances. Indeed I have nothing, absolutely nothing. I live by the product of my brain. It is true, a brighter prospect is opening to my view, and what with lectures and private lessons &c., I gain about five hundred thalers (or sixty pounds), per annum. But what, if illness render me incapable of exertion? . . . . .

In addition to all these considerations I must mention one still more important. I have no less than three children, a daughter of eleven, one of seven and a son of four. At present, it is true, they are not with me; but if I married again, it would be at least partly from the hope of assembling my little flock once more around me. Now, as these children are inexpressibly dear to me, and it is my firm opinion that one can never be too kind to children, it would pain me most deeply if a step-mother were to treat them harshly . . . . .

It is now my duty, and a most painful one, to enter into some details of my former life".

Bürger then narrates those events already quoted. "My fever did not calm itself", he continues; "but during ten

years became every day mere and more inextinguishable. I was beloved even as I loved. Yes I could fill a volume were I to narrate the martyrdom of those years, the struggle between love and duty. Had my wife been a woman of common mind, had she been less noble, less generous, in which indeed she was aided by a certain coldness towards myself, I should long since have perished and should not now write these lines".

"In 1784 my first wife died of consumption which was hereditary in her family. In 1785 I married the beloved of my soul; but after a short and blissful union I lost her likewise from a fever which followed the birth of her child. The bliss of her possession, the anguish of her loss no words can declare. Since then I live alone, with a sad and aching heart. Can the man who thus stands before Elisa yet charm her? True, I have not flattered my portrait, and it may be allowed to him who has not concealed his worst foibles to say something to his own advantage. To the wife who is capable of loving me such as I am, and whom I love with all the strength of my affection, I could at least promise no unhappy existence. If it is dear to her to be idolized, to be cherished on my bosom, that at least would never fail her; for when I really love, my affection is sure and unchangeable, and however common the observation that satiety is the grave of love, it is only false love, love unworthy of that holy name which it can affect. Even the wife whom, after our union, I should be unhappy enough not to care for, need not fear any unworthy treatment from me. Witness her with whom I dwelt ten years without one harsh or unkind word. I should

rather be inclined to quarrel, with the being I adored; but only if her affection were not mine in an equal degree. God protect me from the woman who cannot return me heart for heart. As yet I have never found myself in such a position; but of all others it must be the most insupportable. I might then easily become inconsolable; for I fancy I am capable of violent jealousy; not indeed according to the common fashion, in following or watching the steps and actions of my wife, nor in restraining her freedom in any particular; but secret despair would rend my heart, and I should wander before her eyes like a tormented spirit. Now, Elisa, weigh well yourself and me; make further inquiries, if possible, about me and my circumstances from others; but believe nothing till I have myself confirmed it; for though scarcely any one can paint me in darker colours than I have painted myself, another might delineate me less truly. You have a mother and, as I am informed, a truly excellent mother, wise and upright: if ever the counsel of such a mother was dear and precious to you, in this juncture listen to her voice".

"She will probably read this description with a calmer and more impartial spirit than you, sweet and fair enthusiast, and the counsel of the mother's head will be more to be depended on than that of the daughter's heart. If she thinks that the man whom I have here drawn with the pencil of truth, without omitting one blemish which can in any way concern you, could still make a good husband, then surrender yourself to the full impulse of your generous nature. But no, not even then till you have seen

me. I too must see you to judge whether in soul and spirit I really deeply love you. Again I adjure you by your own weal and woe, by the weal and woe of a man to whom your happiness is dearer than his own, do not become my wife, unless you can throw yourself with entire love and confidence into my arms. I will observe the same rule with regard to you, and thus I trust that the Almighty will consecrate our union".<sup>(1)</sup>

After such a letter in which the writer not only makes no attempt to extenuate past errors, but even seems anxious to paint them in the darkest colours possible, the woman who accepted him as the partner of her life could not plead ignorance of his faults as any excuse for her own. Elisa, however, was too romantic, too inexperienced, too confiding in her own powers of attraction, to be either alarmed or discouraged by this not very flattering picture. She bade him come to her in person. He came, they were united, and Bürger brought back his third bride to Göttingen.

For awhile all seemed to promise well; but this bright sun-shine was of brief duration. The married pair resembled each other too much in the defects of their character to live long happily together. Bürger's own letters which appeared after his death under the title of "Bürgers Ehegeschichte" or "marriage history" and which probably he would never himself have made public serve in some degree to elucidate the mystery. Many of these, however, are

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(1) *Leben von Bürger. Althoff.*



written in a tone which would offend the moral feeling of our readers; we shall therefore content ourselves with extracting a few passages in which Bürger accuses his wife, not only of extravagance, hypocrisy and neglect of all domestic duties, but of sins of a still darker nature. "I perhaps" he writes to her mother, "am the last in the whole town who, convinced by irrefragable proofs, have recognised her for what she is. 'She summoned thee to her,' I said to myself, 'from afar; she became thy wife without any outward pressure, of her own free-will. How then could she ever reward thee by infidelity, even if the first flame of her love should be extinguished? How much less when she sees that she is treated with the warmest affection, the most boundless confidence'".

"Thus did I speak to myself, and God is my witness how carefully I avoided the slightest appearance of jealousy. With true and hearty love I clasped her to my bosom as my wife, and led her here. Soon after our arrival, I know not why, she burst into violent complaints that I did not love her as I had loved Molly. I sought at first jestingly, tenderly, to reassure her. Not succeeding in this, in the consciousness of my innocence, I grew impatient, and finding my protestations of no avail, struck my forehead and rushed out of the room. Soon after, I received a letter breathing the most passionate love, and regretting having so excited me by her foolish reproaches. In a few moments I had clasped her in my arms and I imagined all was right again. It seemed only a shower such as often falls on the soil of love and renders it only more fruitful and more charming". He goes on to

say that gradually her tenderness visibly diminished, her manners grew colder and colder, she every day became fonder of general society and more indifferent to that of her husband, inviting all the young students to her house "by dozens; not a day passed without their coming to pay their court to her". Every Thursday she gave soirées, where, in addition to blind-man's buff, forfeits and such-like games, proverbs and ultimately dramatic representations were introduced, in which of course Elisa played a prominent part, and by her biting wit, her coquetry and love of conquest, excited no little jealousy and enmity, especially among her own sex. Bürger's hopes that the birth of a child would sober this immoderate love of pleasure were disappointed. In vain did he address her the most affectionate letters, imploring her to remember the vows she had sworn at the altar, reminding her that their humble means were totally inadequate to supply her extravagant habits, that her neglect of every household duty drew on her the animadversion of all right-minded persons &c. Her reply was cold and heartless, and although she some time after, seemed to repent her conduct and promised amendment, the favourable change was but temporary. Reports of her infidelity met Bürger's ear; at first he refused to give them credit; but they created so painful an impression that he sank into a state of mental and bodily suffering which attracted the attention even of his thoughtless and neglectful partner. An explanation ensued; Elisa, while confessing that her heart had not remained untouched by the homage of one of her admirers solemnly protested

she had never, even in thought, been faithless to her duty as a wife, that she was pure and unstained as when she first gave her hand to her husband at the altar. "I clasped her in my arms", continues Bürger, "with the most passionate tenderness, and vowed in my secret heart to restore her all my confidence, all my love".

Brief was this sweet delusion. Elisa's assurances were false. Proofs — too certain proofs of her guilt — at length compelled her husband to insist on a separation. <sup>(1)</sup> The erring wife returned to Suabia where having soon expended her little fortune she dragged on a miserable existence, and was ultimately forced to gain a livelihood by singing Bürger's ballads; and the unhappy poet was once more left in solitude and desolation. Retribution indeed had fallen upon him — in the shape of the very sin he had himself committed. Now he could judge of the agonies he had inflicted on the unrepining Dora. He felt this, and remorse increased his sufferings. Sick in mind and body, he shunned the society of his dearest friends, and shutting himself up in his study refused all sympathy and consolation. Shortly before his separation he had caught a severe cold which had settled on his chest. His duties as lecturer compelled him to speak aloud several hours daily, and the exertion so injured the already-weakened organ that his voice failed him entirely, nor did he ever recover it. Forced

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(1) Bürger's *Lebensgeschichte*, p. 157. So strong was the general belief in Elisa's guilt that she was compelled to leave Göttingen privately, to avoid being insulted by the students.

to give up those private lessons from which he derived his principal means of subsistence, he was thankful to accept from the booksellers occasional employment as translator. He was but too happy when the Editor of some provincial journal condescended to employ him. How sad a picture! What profound gloom had settled on that existence which once offered such bright promise! Gradually his failing health rendered him incapable of any exertion whatever, and he would have been reduced to absolute starvation but for the aid of his friends and ultimately of a small pension settled on him by the Prussian government. Gratified by this proof of interest, the sufferer appeared for a brief period to revive; but the improvement was delusive. The fatal symptoms soon returned with redoubled violence, and at length his medical adviser confessed that all earthly hope was vain. "Far from evincing terror or disquiet at this intelligence", says his physician, "he expressed only one desire, that of a speedy and easy death. Towards the evening of the 8<sup>th</sup> of June his speech failed him. He endeavoured to address some observations to his long-tried friend Dr. Jäger, but in vain. We requested him to write his wishes; but although we surrounded him with lights, he was unable to distinguish anything. And as he unclosed his lips to endeavour to answer our questions, he breathed his last, at the age of forty-six."

Thus, at least, his last prayer was granted; his end was peaceful and painless. Let us hope that sincere penitence for the great sin of his early life had won his pardon from Him who judges not as man judges, who reads the inmost depths of the

soul, and often perhaps absolvés, where we, in our short-sightedness, condemn. Despite all his faults, Bürger had many and ardent friends, and his physician, the author of the biography from which we have principally drawn the details of his life, speaks of him in terms of the warmest affection. "He was ever ready", he observes, "to assist all those in distress, often depriving himself of the necessities of life to aid the wretched. One individual fact in particular I must not omit, as it evinces the nobility of his heart, which was a stranger to vindictiveness or hatred. The man who had most deeply injured him, the man who had cheated him of the caution-money committed to his charge by his grand-father, the man who had grossly slandered him to his employers, and who was the author of that memorial to the Hanoverian government in which he was so falsely and so vilely accused, that very man, by a singular chance, on finding himself in the depths of misery, applied for aid to him whom he had so shamelessly calumniated; and implored him to assist him and his sick wife in their wretched condition. Bürger instantly forgot the past. Touched to the heart, he deeply regretted that his circumstances allowed of his giving a few thalers only; but he did that which to him, who detested every appearance of intrusiveness, was infinitely more difficult than even the sacrifice of a considerable sum from his own narrow means. He sent a petition to the principal inhabitants of Göttingen begging them to spare something from their own wealth for the assistance of a family plunged in the depths of misery. The man, he said, had no great claims to

respect, and his present condition might not be altogether undeserved; but he was unfortunate, and compassion might sometimes be allowed to weigh heavier in the scale than justice. The result of this enterprise exceeded Bürger's hopes. He collected above a hundred thalers, which with his own mite he joyfully forwarded to the unhappy man.

Nor were sympathy and compassion the only amiable traits in his character. However often he may have been led astray by passion from strict duty and morality, he never lost the sense of the truly good and great. The recital of a noble action would fill his eyes with tears, and he would exclaim that it was indeed delightful to find some whose heads and hearts were in the right place. Generous and disinterested amid all his failings, he often confessed with the deepest regret that he would not himself have been capable of such a sacrifice. Utterly free from meanness or deception, he could scarcely believe their existence in others, even when he himself became their victim. Modest and unpretending, far from exaggerating his own merits as a poet he seems scarcely to have estimated them at their proper worth. He was always ready to listen to the observations of his friends; and far from being offended by their criticisms, if kindly given, was grateful for the interest they evinced in his fame".<sup>(1)</sup>

All Bürger's principal poems have been so frequently translated that we have refrained from offering any version except those sonnets which seem the natural out-pourings of his heart. We

(1) *Leben von Bürger* by E. G. Althoff.

will, however, venture to present our readers with one specimen less known "Our village", which in the charm of its descriptions of simple rural scenes reminds us of a landscape of our own Wilson or Gainsborough.

## MY VILLAGE.

I claim a name  
For my hamlet's fame;  
For meads so green  
Are no-where seen  
As charm us here;  
Here rocks arise,  
A pasture there,  
While yonder lies  
The meadow fair.  
Here groves extend  
Their shadowy gloom,  
And lime-trees lend  
Their sweet perfume.  
The sheep-cotes stand  
On yonder height,  
A mead at hand,  
My "calm delight";  
For thus I call  
That lowly spot  
Where stands my all,  
My own sweet cot.  
Where elm and vine  
Their leaves entwine  
And form above  
The shade I love.

A silver brook  
With murmuring sound  
From yonder nook

Its way has found,  
And flows on singing  
Its joyous hymn,  
Mid tall trees flinging  
Their shadows dim.  
In its clear fountain  
Reflecting still  
The grove, the mountain,  
The lambs, the hill,  
The sunlight dancing  
Across the stream,  
The fishes glancing  
With silvery gleam,  
Now upwards dashing  
Now diving low,  
Their gay fins flashing  
With radiant glow.  
Oh! all is fair;  
But loveliest, thou,  
Givest it the air  
Of heaven below.

The earliest dawn  
Of rosy morn,  
Awakes us both,  
While, nothing loth,  
My steps she leads  
Where morning's queen  
The flowery meads  
And pastures green  
With dew is sprinkling,  
Where pearls are glittering,  
And dew-drops twinkling  
And birds are twittering.  
The bud uncloses  
Its hidden bloom,  
And blushing roses



Shed sweet perfume.  
They blossom bright love,  
But not more bright  
Than thy sweet form, love,  
My life, my light!  
And now we spread  
Our frugal meal,  
Where o'er our head  
The sunbeams steal  
Through leaves embowering  
And branches flowering.  
Thus in full measure  
Still abound  
Mirth and pleasure  
In joyful sound.  
Oh! blissful lot!  
If time be kind  
And blight thee not,  
But leave my mind  
Untainted still  
And firm my will,  
Nor change the form  
And heart so warm,  
Then fortune go  
To East or West,  
Thy gifts bestow  
As thou deems't best,  
I still shall gaze  
From envy clear,  
And sing thy praise,  
My village dear!

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## CHAPTER IX.

### WILLIAM SCHLEGEL. FREDERICK SCHLEGEL. TIECK LA MOTTE FOUQUÉ. NOVALIS. SCHULZE.

GOETHE AND SCHILLER.—THE ROMANTIC SCHOOL.—THE TWO SCHLEGELS AS CRITICS AND POETS.—WILLIAM SCHLEGEL.—UNJUSTIFIABLE ATTACK ON MOLIÈRE.—FINE ANALYSIS OF SHAKESPEARE.—MASTERLY TRANSLATION.—FREDERICK SCHLEGEL'S "WISDOM OF THE INDIANS".—TIECK.—BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH.—HIS "VOLKSMÄRCHEN".—HIS "NOVELLEN".—WONDERFUL POWERS OF FANCY AND IMAGINATION.—EXCELLENCIES AND DEFECTS.—POEMS.—SPECIMENS.—LA MOTTE FOUQUÉ.—HIS "UNDINE".—POEMS.—THE "OCTOGENARIAN".—"CONSOLATION".—NOVALIS.—HIS YOUTH.—HIS BRIGHT PROMISE.—SOPHIA.—FIRST LOVE.—DEATH OF SOPHIA.—SECOND AFFECTION.—ILLNESS.—PREMATURE DEATH.—HIS WORKS.—"HENRY VON OFTERDINGEN"—"APHORISMS."—THE PUPIL OF SAIS.—"SACRED POEMS."—CRITICAL EXAMINATION OF HIS PRODUCTIONS.—ERNEST SCHULZE.—HIS BRIEF AND TROUBLED CAREER.—HIS POEMS.

We have now traced the course of German poetry from its very source to the moment when its celebrity resounded through Europe. We have placed before the reader the records of the principal German poets from Gleim to Bürger. But there are two, who rise superior to all the rest, even as the stately oak of the forest towers above surrounding trees, whose lives we shall not even attempt to trace here, Goethe and Schiller. The biographies of both have

been drawn by abler hands than ours. True, even of Goethe, complete as are the memoirs Mr. Lewes has placed before us, something may remain to be told—while with regard to Schiller, so many new sources of information have been pouring in upon us since Mr. Carlyle's unrivalled biography and Sir L. Bulwer's vigorous sketch, as to afford ample materials for further interesting details. But to present these, even in an abridged form, would occupy too much space for our limits now fast drawing to a close. We must therefore reserve all notice of Germany's greatest poets, all appreciation of their works, of their influence on the literature of their country, save perhaps on its drama, for a future volume. We will turn from them to a school the disciples of which are less generally known in this country—the romantic school, as it is called, though the appellation does not very definitely explain its meaning. In ordinary parlance we understand by this term that peculiar description of poetry which sprung up at the commencement of the Christian era in contra-distinction to that of Greece and Rome. The Romantic is usually opposed to the Classic, as Gothic is opposed to pagan architecture, and to a certain extent this definition is correct. The disciples of this new school were violent opponents of that arbitrary system which, exaggerating the doctrines of Goethe, held up the great masters of antiquity as exclusive models of excellence. They condemned this theory as cold and narrow, opposed to the true interests alike of literature and of progress. They pointed out the vast changes in religion, morality, tone of thought, habits and manners which

separated the ancient from the modern world; they declared that the days of Virgil or Cicero were too far removed from our own to allow of the spirit which animated their works possessing a real living existence among us; that to follow them blindly was to repress all creative powers, all originality. From the times of Pericles or of Augustus they turned to those of Otho the Great or of Henry the Falconer. The lays of the Minnesingers collected once more by Tieck were on every lip. The records of the olden times were ransacked for historic and traditionary lore. Knights and barons were again the only theme of romance and song. The remains of every feudal castle became the shrine of enthusiastic pilgrims, who sighed for the return of the days when those ruined and desolate halls re-echoed with the sound of minstrel-harp and roundelay, when, from those battlements, now overgrown with ivy, waved pennon and silken banner embroidered by ladies' hands, when down that steep mountain-path, now trodden only by the peasant or the traveller, wound long lines of knightly warriors, their armour glittering in the sunshine. The crimes, the miseries of the Middle Ages were forgotten—their romance, around which time and fancy threw a halo of their own, were alone remembered. Nor was it in poetry only that this tendency displayed itself. In art, in architecture the same re-action was visible. The works of the old German painters, the stiff quaint but vigorous productions of Hemmeling or Lucas Cranach were drawn forth from the obscurity in which they had long mouldered. Those glorious cathedrals fast falling

into ruin were repaired and embellished. If the noble "Domkirche" of Speyer and Worms yet tower in solemn majesty above the deserted streets of those once imperial cities, if the Cathedral of Cologne is slowly but gradually advancing towards completion, we owe it in a great measure to the impulse given by the romantic school of Germany.

The founders of this school are William and Frederick Schlegel, Novalis and Tieck. The two former are far more celebrated as philologists and critics than as poets, although their metrical compositions are very numerous. In the creative faculty they were peculiarly deficient; another proof, if any were wanting, of the fallacy of Lessing's argument that "those who could reason could also invent." Yet their influence on the literature of their country was too important to allow of our passing them by in silence. Their career so closely resembles that of Voss or Hoelty that any detailed account would only weary the reader. Indeed, the early lives of all the members of the "Hainbund" present a strong family resemblance to each other. Schlegel studied at Göttingen—became a tutor in a private family—returned to Jena where he wrote for various periodicals, especially the "Horen"—lectured at Berlin—accompanied Mad<sup>me</sup> de Staël in the capacity of tutor to her son to Coppet, and eventually ended his days at Vienna. His biography would be the history of a mind rather than of an individual. Few, indeed, have united learning so vast and various with a sense of the beautiful so keen and so animated. Intimately acquainted with the literature of every age, of every country, he enters, even more fully than Herder,

into its peculiar spirit, while to critical acumen and analytic skill he unites—a rare merit among his country-men—a grasp of comprehension and powers of arrangement seldom excelled. His “Lectures on dramatic Art and Literature”, so well known to the English public by Mr. Black’s able translation, form a masterpiece of erudition, of eloquence and, with one exception, of just and admirable appreciation. This exception, we need scarcely say, consists in his attack on the French dramatists in general and on Molière in particular. The failings and short-comings inherent to the French dramatic system had been already brought to light and animadverted on by Lessing; but even he had not ventured to assail the “Prince of genuine Comedy”, as Voltaire truly styles him. Absurd indeed is the denial of a genius to which all Europe offers up admiring homage, a genius, in its own line unrivalled in any land in any age, and Schlegel proved nothingsave his own absolute incapability of appreciating the truly comic. His arrows not only flew wide of the mark, they rebounded to pierce him who sent them. He forgot how much French literature had contributed to the refinement and elevation of taste in an age when poetry threatened to fall into absolute chaos. “We stand on the shoulders of the French”, observes a modern German critic remarkable for his sound and impartial views, “we must confess that without a Boileau and a Voltaire there would have been no Goethe.”<sup>(1)</sup>

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(1) *Julian Schmidt. Geschichte der deutschen Literatur im 19. Jahrhundert. Vol. 4th.*

From Schlegel's unjust and absurd criticism of Molière, let us turn to his translation of our own Shakespeare, perhaps the most perfect version ever produced. All, even to the peculiar melody of the words is there. We seem surrounded by the very influences which the poet himself conjured up. In this admirable translation Schlegel has conferred an infinite obligation on both countries. He did not live to finish it; but it was completed by his friend Tieck with a success almost equal to his own. We must not allow the re-action which of late years has taken place in Germany, or the mischievous raillery of a writer equally clever and unscrupulous who respects nothing either divine or human,<sup>(1)</sup> to blind us to William Schlegel's merits, to his lofty endowments or to the salutary influence which, on the whole, he exercised over his country and his age. He first thoroughly penetrated into the secret of ancient scenic art. To him it was no longer a thing of the past; it became a living and breathing reality. His analysis of Shakespeare is no less masterly than his translation, though here, as usual, when carried away by his feelings, he saw only the beauties as in Molière he beheld only the defects. In short, let Mr. Heine laugh at him as he will, Schlegel will probably be remembered for other reasons than his "Petite peruque blonde" and his "Ruban."

The career of Frederick Schlegel was somewhat more diversified than that of his brother. Destined for the pursuit of commerce he early deserted the

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(1) Heine, L'Allemagne.

ledger and day-book for the Muses. He studied at Göttingen, married the daughter of the celebrated Jewish philosopher Mendelsohn, and became a convert to the Roman-catholic faith. To his honour be it said that, unlike some of more lofty genius, he did not remain insensible to the fate of his fatherland. In 1800, he followed Archduke Charles in his disastrous campaign and all his eloquence was exerted in rousing Germany to throw off the fetters of her oppressors. This attracted the attention of Prince Metternich who appointed him secretary of Legation to the Austrian Embassy at Frankfurt; but he soon gave up this post to devote himself uninterruptedly to his beloved literary pursuits. He died in 1829. Frederick Schlegel is best known by his celebrated work "On the Wisdom and Language of the Indians", to which even Heine, his pitiless opponent, offers his tribute of admiration. Written at a period when Sanscrit literature was comparatively little studied in Europe, it attracted immediate and general attention. It displays all that wealth of learning, that power of observation for which the author was so remarkable. In his "History of ancient and modern Literature" a work of inferior merit, he strenuously defends the religious creed he had adopted and attacks its opponents with more violence than good taste. Not content with philological and historical labours, he ventured into the regions of romance and poetry; but here he signally failed. His "Lucinde" of which a part only was completed is deficient alike in invention and fancy, while its licentious tone is strangely at variance with the author's usually strictly moral views and



principles. His poems are somewhat superior in grace and melody to those of his brother; but like them are utterly deficient in warmth, passion and imagination.

The extravagances into which the romantic school soon fell, and which have been ascribed to the Schlegels have done much to diminish their *prestige* in Germany. To accuse them of the absurdities of their followers would be as unjust as to render Sir W. Scott responsible for all the silly novels of the Middle Ages to which his own unrivalled productions gave rise. If they are to be attributed to the influence of any of the founders of the romantic school, it is certainly more to Tieck than Schlegel. As a novelist Tieck does not enter into our subject; but he was likewise a poet—nay even his tales, though in prose, are so pervaded with the very spirit of poetry that they may be said to belong to its domains. Tieck was born in 1773. He was the son of an honest rope-maker who, for his class, possessed unusual mental cultivation and whose most earnest desire was to elevate his children to a position superior to his own. Frederick, accordingly, was apprenticed to a sculptor, not probably of first-rate eminence. His master was a true specimen of the German Burgher of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, ere the rapid march of innovation had destroyed much of what was excellent without supplying its place. He was fond of literature of a certain stamp, and Götz von Berlichingen was his favourite work. When young Tieck had performed his duties to the good man's satisfaction, he was permitted, to his infinite delight, to read this well-thumbed volume.

But there was one book the boy preferred even to Götz itself, Schiller's "Robbers". Over this he would pore for hours, and would often rise from the perusal his cheeks bathed in tears.

As he grew older, his passion for poetry increased, but at the same time he became subject to frequent fits of sadness and depression. Often would he lament that cloisters were done away with, that the stricken soul longing for repose could no longer find a refuge. His religious instructions, conducted according to the cold rationalist system of the day, afforded him no consolation. He sought for it in nature, and as the environs of Berlin presented little either picturesque or rural, he spent every leisure hour in wandering in the "*Thiergarten*" which, in some measure, supplies the place of natural beauties to the capital of Prussia. His future career was undetermined; but he resolved not to devote himself to trade and he persuaded his father to send him to the University of Halle in 1792. A college education in England associated with wealth, or at least with an independent position. In Germany, on the contrary, almost every youth whose parents can scrape together a few dollars is sent to a university. The facilities are great, the expense trifling. A student can even now live very comfortably at Heidelberg, Giessen, Halle or Tübingen for about six hundred florins or little more than fifty pounds per annum. A good room will cost seven florins per month, a dinner from thirty to thirty-six kreutzers. The fees for lectures supposing each student attends five classes are about one hundred and ten florins a quarter. Music, Italian and the Oriental

languages are charged extra. Of course sixty years ago every thing was infinitely cheaper.

At Halle, Tieck pursued his studies with energy and success, interrupted however by fits of deep melancholy. The wild brooding imagination which was at a future period to shape itself into so many tales of wonder and of terror was already dimly at work, It had not yet found a safety-valve in literary composition; it boiled and fermented within. He had formed to himself an ideal world, and he turned from every-day life with disgust and weariness. His spiritual and intellectual nature were perpetually in combat with all around him. From this painful condition he was roused by the proposal to join a friend in a journey through the most picturesque parts of Germany. His passion for nature revived in all its force. He was cured.

In 1792 he proceeded to Göttingen and there commenced his literary labours by the translation of Shakespeare's "Tempest". In 1793 we find him at Nuremberg luxuriating in the mediæval architecture of that curious old city. His literary productions, at this period, scarcely announced the wonderful powers of imagination and the play of fancy for which he was afterwards so remarkable. "William Lovell" is a novel in the Godwin style, infinitely inferior, however, to "Caleb Williams".

After wandering from one part of Germany to another for some years, Tieck settled for awhile at Berlin. Here he was patronised by the well-known Nicolai, the friend of Lessing. But when the young author threw himself headlong into the mystical phi-

losophy of Jacob Böhme and declared that henceforth these doctrines should alone be his spiritual guide, the good bookseller started back in dismay and gave him up as insane—and no wonder. Yet amid the confused, strange, wild and incomprehensible jargon in the poor shoemaker's works, there is more than one fine and lofty idea which has been borrowed, without any acknowledgment of the fact, by the more celebrated philosophers of Germany. Such is the assertion "that there is nothing purely evil in the universe, that every-thing contains something good— and others, stray diamonds amid masses of rubbish." Perhaps our readers will remember Dr. Johnson's well-known aphorism that if "Jacob like St. Paul saw in his vision unutterable things, he had not the good sense of the Apostle or he would not have attempted to utter them".

From Böhme, Tieck turned to the doctrines of Kant, Fichte and Schelling, sufficiently metaphysical and abstruse, one would think, for most men, but trivial and child-like, as he declared, after those of his favourite. In this mood of mind he repaired to Jena, where Böhme had, it seems, many adherents, and where he fixed his abode. Gradually, his enthusiastic attachment to mysticism declined, and by a re-action not unusual with men of his temperament, while still living almost exclusively in an ideal world of his own, he became as decided an enemy to transcendentalism as he had once been zealous in its defence. "He sought to treat life and his own emotions", says a contemporary writer, as an "agreeable plaything, to poetize the most insignificant objects no less than

the loftiest. Like his friends he aimed at the irrational, the inexplicable; not, however, to believe in them, but to sport with them. He borrowed a few words from transcendental idealism; but he placed them only in the mouths of his poetical fools; he never really occupied himself with them". (1)

Tieck was a fervent admirer of Shakespeare. When in 1810 he visited London, he almost shed tears over the mutilation which his glorious dramas had sustained at the hands of his revisors. How delighted would he be, could he see them now, restored to their genuine form and enhanced by all the charm, the finest acting and the most exquisite scenery can bestow. Tieck died at Berlin in 1843. (2)

As a writer, it is principally by his "Volksmärchen", his fairy tales that Tieck will be remembered. Seldom indeed do we meet with a fancy at once so brilliant and so sportive, an imagination so fantastic and so varied. He needed not this sublunary sphere. He bore within himself a world of his own creation, very different indeed from that in which we live and breathe; but better suited to his fantastic spirit. This world was peopled, not by merry mocking sprites like those in German lays and legends in the olden time, not by fairies "tripping it merrily by moonlight", as in Shakespeare's "Midsummer-Night's Dream" or Wieland's "Oberon", but by beings of quite another mould, demons, who shed their malignant

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(1) Julian Schmidt, *Geschichte der deutschen Dichtung im neunzehnten Jahrhundert*. 4. Band.

(2) *Leben von Tieck*, von Köpke.

influence on mankind, or spirits such as those the Rosicrucians had conjured up, Nymphs of the air, the woods or the waters, creatures as fair as the elements that gave them birth. When we remember the tendency of the Teutonic mind to superstition of every description, we can scarcely wonder at the credence these fantastic but graceful doctrines obtained in Germany in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, more especially as forming a delicious contrast to the horrors of demonology and witchcraft which had so long darkened the horizon. It seemed as though the bright days of early Greece had revived. Once more the wanderer might hope to find some dryad sleeping beneath the shade or some fair Undine combing her shining tresses beside the crystal fountains.

Never was man better fitted than Tieck to weave these airy threads into form and shape. In the portraiture of these, in every thing indeed "surpassing nature's laws" Tieck is a master. Like a potent magician he has but to wave his wand to lend even the common objects of life a supernatural hue—to invest them with spectral horrors or unearthly beauty. Some of his English imitators, Monk Lewis for instance, and Mr Maturin, may have equalled or even excelled him in the delineations of the dark and terrible; but in calling up images of beauty they were far behind their model. While following him we feel ourselves transported into an enchanted world. The trees, the flowers, the very grass are no longer silent and inanimate. They live, they breathe, they move around us. The air is full of strange voices of unearthly

melodies. There are moments when we are tempted to believe that Tieck has acquired a closer intimacy with nature than that granted to common men, that he has really dived into the secret of her operations, into the workings of her laws. At times, however, his passion for the dark and mysterious carries him too far, and the only impression left is a vague horror, a sickening repulsion. So it is in the "Blonde Eckhardt". Eckhardt dwells with his wife in a solitary castle; he associates with but one single friend, Walther. A dream, on which Walther makes some observations, brings about a certain coldness, and at length urged on by an irresistible power, Eckhardt murders his friend. His wife dies; he remains alone and desolate till he finds another friend, Hugo, to whom he relates the gloomy tale; but what is his horror when on looking at him more closely he perceives that it is Walther's face. He flies into the depths of the forest—everywhere Walther meets him. At length comes a sorceress, who tells him she is both Hugo and Walther, that neither ever existed, and so the story breaks off leaving us in a painful and unsatisfactory state of doubt and gloom. There is no moral, no elevating influence, nor is it to be doubted that this species of literature exercised a deleterious influence on the minds of the German people, especially of the young. We cannot therefore regret the re-action which has lately diminished its popularity and substituted another and better species in its place.

Tieck's last works, the "Novellen", though highly finished in style and form, are wanting in the fasci-

nation which his "Volksmärchen" possess to so eminent a degree. Unrivalled in the world of phantasy, he becomes a mere ordinary writer when he descends to that of daily life. Accustomed to dwell amid beings of his own creation, he scarcely knows how to deal with the common affections and feelings of humanity; he is no longer in his element. His dramas are open to the same objection. Even in the most celebrated, the "Genoveva" and "Emperor Octavianus" founded,—the one on the well-known tradition of the Princess compelled by the jealousy of a cruel husband to wander forth with her infant son alone and deserted, the other on the same legend whence Shakespeare has drawn his Winter's Tale,—there is a want of human interest, a coldness, a diffuseness which chills the reader. The English public is doubtless familiar with many of Tieck's tales by Mr Carlyle's spirited translations. His lyrical poems are less known, and in wealth of imagination, in power and intensity are far inferior to his prose works. The tints are often so vague and shadowy as to melt altogether from our view when we approach them closely; but there is the same passionate love of nature which distinguishes his "Volksmärchen" and now and then a spirituality and earnestness which have a peculiar charm.

#### THE POET.

My spirit longs for the embowering shade,  
The forest dell, the cool and verdant wood.  
There gentle streams refresh the thirsty glade,  
And lilies float upon the crystal flood.



The face of heaven is one deep vault of blue  
Bending down lovingly to smiling earth;  
Each bud and floweret seem to bloom anew,  
The sun's warm kisses have renewed their birth.

The birds are singing upon bush and brake,  
Pouring forth joyous melodies of praise;  
In the green vales the little lambskins dance,  
When bud and flower and lamb and streamlet wake,  
While mortals too their grateful homage raise,  
The poet feels his soul wrapt in a holy trance!

## NIGHT.

In the wintry night, in the raging storm  
A traveller paused appall'd  
He bent to earth his trembling form  
And on the stars he call'd.

My bosom beats, my heart is sad,  
All lonely is my doom,  
For here and there, I know not where,  
I wander towards the tomb.  
Ah! little star,  
You are still afar.

Then a soft gleam illum'd the night,  
He heard a mystic strain,  
He felt his bosom grow more light,  
He seem'd to breathe again.

"Oh! mortal, raise thy glance aloft"  
Thou art not lonely here;  
Trust to the light thine eye so oft  
Has mark'd from our bright sphere.  
Each little star is not afar,  
To thee they still are near.

Very different from Tieck, but equally extraordinary in his peculiar line, was Frederick von Hardenburg or Novalis. Rarely have religious fervour and fantastic imagination been more singularly blended. His religion was not the simple child-like piety which lays us at the feet of the Almighty in unquestioning submission to his decrees. He was perpetually striving to dive into the secrets of time and futurity, to solve those mysteries which it has pleased Providence to hide from our view. He sought, not only to imbue literature with religion, but to erect it into a new and loftier creed.

Of all the German poets of the eighteenth century, Novalis was perhaps the least known to the English reader till Mr. Carlyle introduced him to their notice; but in his own land he was, for many years, the object of admiration verging on idolatry, at least among the rising generation. His pure unsullied character, his premature death, the mystic tone of his productions invested his memory with a kind of halo in the imaginations of the young. This indiscriminating enthusiasm has greatly declined. His works have been of late years subjected to severe and sometimes even harsh criticism; but none will refuse the tribute of admiration to his genius, or of pity for his early doom.

Novalis was of noble extraction. His father, director of the Saxon salt-mines was a member of the Herrnhuter community, a man of spotless integrity and high principles. Frederick was born May 2<sup>nd</sup> 1772. With the exception of one sister he was the eldest of eleven children, all peculiarly gifted in mind and

person—all, with two exceptions, destined to premature decay. Frederick was extremely delicate in childhood though without suffering from absolute disease. Dreamy and silent, he evinced but little talent of any description. Shunning the society of boys of his own age, he was remarked for nothing save his passionate tenderness for his mother, whose side he could scarcely be induced to quit. In his ninth year, he was seized with a severe attack of illness; but he recovered, and from this moment a complete and extraordinary change came over him. His faculties awoke as though from a deep slumber, and reading, for which he had hitherto showed but little taste or inclination, was now his delight. In 1792 he was sent to the University of Leipsic and the following year to Wittenberg. There he prosecuted his studies with unwearied ardour and proportionate success. It was not only classical lore that engaged his active and inquiring mind. Science in all its branches, mathematics and history were no less objects of attention. In 1794 he repaired to Arnstadt in Thüringen to study practical engineering. It was soon after his arrival in this tranquil and romantic spot that he made the acquaintance of a young and beautiful girl Sophia K— who, though she had just attained her thirteenth year (rather an early age it must be confessed to feel or to inspire so romantic a passion as love) seems to have been gifted with powers of mind and charms of person which exercised an irresistible spell on all with whom she came in contact. “Even in a child” observes Novalis’s biographer, <sup>(1)</sup> “we

(1) *Urd., Leben von Novalis.*

sometimes perceive an expression so ethereally lovely, so angelic that we are forced to call it celestial or unearthly, and generally these fair transparent countenances impress us with the fear that they are too delicate for this world, that it is death or immortality that shines upon us from those brilliant eyes, and too often a rapid decay converts the sad foreboding into certainty. Every one who has known the beloved of our friend, will agree that no description can give any idea of the celestial harmony with which she breathed and moved, of the peerless grace which encircled her. Novalis became a poet every time he looked on her."

The youth obtained without difficulty the consent of Sophia's parents, on condition that the marriage should be deferred till the bride had attained a suitable age. The future seemed bright with promise, when Sophia was seized with a dangerous illness, and though to all appearance she completely recovered, yet the germs of that fatal disease which was destined so soon to terminate her young existence were already sown. Novalis, who had been overwhelmed with anguish at the illness of his beloved, was completely re-assured by the physicians, and being appointed auditor of the department of Weissenfels, of which his father was director, he was compelled to remove thither. Thus his visits to Gröningen, where Sophia resided, were necessarily subjected to considerable interruption. It was therefore with mingled astonishment and terror that he learned she was at Jena, whither she had repaired for the purpose of undergoing a surgical operation. Despite all that care

and skill, could effect, her medical attendants pronounced the case hopeless. Sophia evinced the utmost courage and resignation, while Novalis, mastering his agony, watched beside her bed and listened with breaking heart to every accent of that voice which so long had been his music. Feeling her end approaching the youthful sufferer expressed a wish to return to the home of her childhood. Conveyed thither by short and easy stages she seemed for an instant to revive. Novalis passed his time between Grüningen, and his own home, where his presence was no less required to cheer and comfort his brother Erasmus who was sinking to a premature grave.

His sufferings at this period can be better imagined than described. He left the bedside of a dying brother to whom he was most tenderly attached, only to watch beside the bride whom he had so lately beheld in all the bloom of youthful grace and beauty, and whom he loved with the passionate ardour of a young and fervent spirit. At times he was compelled to tear himself from both to fulfil the duties of his office. Perhaps it was to these brief intervals that he was indebted for the preservation of the strength of mind and body which alone could have sustained him, beneath the weight of so much anguish. The 17<sup>th</sup> of May was the fifteenth birthday of his beloved. He had seen her but a few days before, had fancied her somewhat better, and had left her for a brief space, to obey the imperative call of duty. On the 19<sup>th</sup> she expired. No one dared to communicate the tidings to Novalis. At length his brother Carl undertook the painful mission. "Novalis

uttered not a word", observes Tieck: "he shut himself up in his chamber where he wept incessantly, for three days and three nights. He then set off for Arnstadt that he might be near the remains of her he had loved best on earth. On the 14<sup>th</sup> April Erasmus also departed this life. Novalis thus communicated the intelligence to Carl, who had been compelled to take a journey into Lower-Saxony:

"Be comforted; Erasmus has conquered. The blossoms of youth have detached themselves one by one from our wreath here, to bloom more brightly in an eternal sphere". "It has grown night around me", he writes to one who had soothed the last hours of his beloved, "while I was yet looking forth on the first beams of morning. My grief is as boundless as my love. For the last three years she has been the object of my every thought. She alone bound me to my country, to my occupations, to my life. With her, I am separated from all; for I have scarcely myself left. It is evening around me, and I feel as though I too must soon depart. I would fain be calm and see kind faces around me. I would fain live in her spirit, and be gentle and loving as she was. The care, the friendship with which you sought to cheer her last days will live in my memory as eternally as her image. My Sophia had a lovely death. Beforehand there were a few terrible hours which she bore calmly, sweetly and consolingly; every moment she became dearer to me. She learnt her fate with cheerful resignation, and a gentle pang at length removed her from every earthly sorrow."

The idea that he should soon rejoin her he mourned, calmed Novalis's anguish. "I will not come to you ill", he writes to an intimate friend. "I already feel myself serener and happier. The colours on the dark ground of the picture are brightening. Morning approaches. How delighted shall I be to relate my dreams to her, when I awake and find myself in that world where, I well know, she has preceded me. To tell her 'I loved thee, I dreamt of thee on earth; thou wert what thou art now, even in thine earthly form; thou wert called hence; but a little while and lo I follow thee!'"

"Yesterday", he writes May 2<sup>nd</sup> 1797, "I attained my twenty-fifth year. I live my past life again here in silent contemplation. There is a sweet and quiet spot enclosed by a simple white railing. The hamlet with its blooming gardens and white cottages stands on a neighbouring hill, and in some places the eye loses itself in the blue distance. I know how gladly you would have stood beside me and aided me to plant flowers upon her grave. Two years ago, she gave me a beautiful cake adorned with the national flag; to-day her parents presented me with all the little gifts she received on her last birth-day with so much joy. Think sometimes on me when you visit this calm spot where your friend will repose for ever."

He was indeed destined ere long to follow his first love to that unseen world which, with its mighty mysteries, was to him an object of perpetual contemplation till it became more a reality than the material creation around him. But he mistook his own nature,

when he imagined that deep as was his anguish, it would close his heart for ever to the tender passion he was so eminently fitted both to feel and to inspire. Yet it cannot for an instant be doubted that he was perfectly sincere in his often expressed belief, that with Sophia his every joy was gone. All violent emotions, more especially that of grief, seem eternal while they last, nor can any eloquence persuade us that the day may come when the fierce agony of sorrow will have passed away, when the smile, chastened indeed, will have returned to the lips whence it seemed for ever banished, and hope, nay even gladness to the heart, to which we firmly believed they must henceforth be strangers. It is only after repeated trials that we learn that

“Pain and grief

Are transitory things, no less than joy,

And tho’ they leave us not the men we were,

Still they do leave us.”

Nor is the experience of this truth unattended with pangs of a different nature, it is true but scarcely less bitter than those from which we are about to escape. We cling with loving tenderness to our grief as to a holy shrine to abandon which is an unpardonable sin. We reproach ourselves with inconstancy, with coldness of heart; we turn with horror from those beams of hope and comfort which begin once more to warm and gladden us. Yet slowly, like the returning dawn after a night of tempest, softly, imperceptibly, they glide into our souls, lighting up the darkness within us with heavenly light, not the less radiant because at times it is still dimmed with tears.



After some weeks devoted to the memory of Sophia, Novalis returned to his duties, which he fulfilled more sedulously than ever, to banish thought. His leisure hours he devoted to poetry and metaphysics. It was at this time he composed his "Hymns" his "Voices of the Night", and indeed most of those works which have placed his name before the public. In the summer of 1799 he made the acquaintance of the lady destined to succeed Sophia in his affections. It was under the guise of friendship that this new affection stole into his heart. He talked to her of Sophia. She sympathized in his grief, and listened to his tale, until she became so intimately associated in his mind with the image of the lost one, that he could no longer separate them. Perhaps it was by this delusion, that he endeavoured to excuse in his own eyes what may have seemed like too easy a forgetfulness of the past. But who can wonder if at the age of twenty-seven, with a heart so susceptible of every warm and tender emotion, he should once more have yielded to the influence of love? The union was postponed for prudential reasons; but Novalis looked forward to its accomplishment as the end and aim of his existence, and with renewed hope and gladness, health likewise seemed to return.

In the same year he again met William Schlegel, whom he had known at College, and Tieck, both of whom soon became his warmest admirers. There can be no stronger proof, indeed, of the influence which this singularly-constituted mind exercised over all with whom it came in contact, than the enthusiasm with which it inspired that celebrated critic,

for so many years the arbiter of literary taste, not only in Germany, but throughout the greater part of Europe. The intellect of Schlegel, no less clear than comprehensive, was diametrically opposed to the vague and undefined tone which more or less pervades all Frederick von Hardenberg's productions. But the magic of genius drew them together. Tieck, whose fanciful and wayward spirit presented more similitude to that of Novalis, has given the following description of their meeting. "It was in the summer of this year that I first saw him. We passed many delightful hours with Schlegel, Schelling and other friends. On my return, I visited him in his own home and was introduced to his family. He was active in the discharge of his duties, overflowing with zeal and kindliness."

"When I returned to Jena in the autumn he frequently visited me there. His elder sister married about this period. The wedding was celebrated on an estate in the neighbourhood. After this temporary gaiety he secluded himself in a lonely spot at the Goldnau in Thüringen, at the foot of a range of mountains, and there wrote the greater part of his "Henry von Ofterdingen". He lived much in the society of two estimable individuals, the brother and the brother-in-law of his intended bride. In 1800 he returned to Weissenfels, and the 31<sup>st</sup> of May he wrote as follows:

"My romance progresses rapidly. Twelve pages are ready, and the plan of the whole is arranged in my head. There will be two volumes; the first will be completed, I hope, in three weeks; the whole is to be an apotheosis of poetry. In the first book Henry is

to be prepared for the part of a poet. In the second he is to step forward as one. It is a first attempt in every respect. There are a few songs after my fashion. Romances, strictly so called, delight me. I shall draw various advantages from this work. My head is full of ideas for romances and comedies."

When I left Geneva in 1800, I again visited my friend at Weisenfels. I found him apparently well and cheerful, though those around him insisted that he had grown thinner and paler. He was more abstemious than ever, drank no wine and scarcely touched animal food, living almost entirely on milk and vegetables. We drove, rode or walked out daily. I carefully watched him; but I never perceived the slightest shortness of breath, or any other sign of debility, and I endeavoured to laugh him out of his excessive temperance, as I considered it not only erroneous, but injurious to his health. He was full of plans for the future. His house was already prepared to receive his bride, and the marriage fixed for the following spring. His life seemed in all the redundancy of youthful promise, and when we parted I little dreamt we should never meet again."

In August, just as he was about to set off to celebrate his nuptials, he began to spit blood. This however he did not consider of any importance; but the malady rapidly increasing, the marriage was delayed, and at the beginning of October he accompanied his parents to Dresden, where he continued for some time in hopes of deriving benefit from the change of air and scene. These hopes were delusive.

He grew daily weaker, and at length, his physicians confessed that all earthly skill was vain. Finding his malady increase, he expressed so earnest a desire to breathe his last, beneath the shelter of that roof where he had first seen the light, that his medical attendants themselves advised his removal thither. The sight of the spot where he had passed so many happy hours seemed to exercise a soothing influence over both mind and body. An improvement took place; he suffered but little pain, continued to read, write, and occasionally to compose. The Bible was always beside him, and from its inspired pages he gathered hope and consolation. Not, indeed, that he was conscious of his dangerous condition. On the contrary; the nearer he approached his end, the more did he flatter himself with the hopes of speedy recovery, and with this hope new germs of genius seemed to burst forth. "He spoke", says Tieck, "of various works of which he had already formed the design". The "Of-terdingen" he determined on writing anew and completely re-moulding it. Shortly before his death he exclaimed "it is now only, I begin to feel what poetry really is. Numberless poems completely different from any I have hitherto composed suggest themselves to my mind".

From the 19<sup>th</sup> the anniversary of Sophia's death, he grew evidently weaker, but the same cheerful tranquillity reigned in his features and conversation. One of the last visits he ever received was that of Schlegel with whom he conversed for several hours on a variety of subjects, more particularly their respective works. He passed the night quietly and, early the next morning, requested his affianced who

• was watching beside him to hand him down some volume that he might search for a particular passage. Frederick Schlegel entered soon after and found him calmly slumbering. Thus he passed into eternity. His countenance retained its usual calm and serene expression.

He was tall, slender and finely formed. He wore his light brown hair in curls falling on his shoulders. His hazel eyes were bright and beaming, his complexion almost transparent. In general society he was retiring; but among his intimate friends he was the life of the social circle. His conversation was animated and his manner commanding. He excelled in manly exercises, and none could have conceived he bore within him the germ of early decay".

Thus died at the age of twenty-eight this young poet so full of high hope and aspirations, most of which were never destined to be accomplished. The influence he exercised over the minds of his contemporaries and of his immediate posterity seems to us, we must confess, out of all proportion either with the extent or the merit of his productions, notwithstanding the praises so lavishly showered upon him by English writers of the highest eminence. His sacred hymns alone can claim real poetic value. The Romance of "Henry of Ofterdingen" which by-the-by is in prose, is, as an artistic work, a complete failure. The elements of beauty indeed exist; but in such a state of chaos and confusion that to distinguish them is impossible. It is not only that it deals exclusively with the shadowy, the distant, the unreal. The tone, the language are those of a sleep-walker. "In Henry

von Ofterdingen", says a critic already quoted, <sup>(1)</sup> we now and then meet an event or a form which we fancy, if more closely examined, might excite our interest; but if we approach a step nearer, they are lost in mist. All passes as in a dream. The poet, his beloved, his tutor, the moon, the sun, the mind and a dozen other allegorical ideas are all the same thing, and in this world of shadows there is only the appearance of movement. After Novalis has led us into the land of fable he treats our fancy in a way which must make the best heads giddy. Not only the action, but even the feelings become fragmentary and incomprehensible".

The rest of Novalis's productions are nothing more than an unconnected collection of "Aphorisms" sometimes deep and original, but just as often paradoxical and unintelligible. "We are occasionally dazzled", says Schmidt, "by a gleam of genius; but if we endeavour to enter into the real meaning, to understand what has dimly floated before the poet's brain, we are soon convinced of the impossibility. They are mere embryo ideas". Even the editors of his works, Tieck and Schlegel, confess themselves at a loss to explain much that he has written, and while pouring forth their eulogies on his "Henry of Ofterdingen" in particular as "one of the finest conceptions of the human mind", are compelled to leave the meaning of the greater part of this extraordinary work in the same profound obscurity in which they found it. They

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<sup>(1)</sup> Julian Schmidt, *Geschichte der deutschen Literatur des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts*.

shroud themselves indeed under the usual pretext that it is impossible to render the outpourings of a genius of such depth and originality comprehensible to the common mind. We must venture to question the validity of this verdict. Vagueness of language must surely arise either from the writer having no very clear conception of what he is desirous of expressing, or from a deficiency in that artistic skill without which the most vivid imagination and the most brilliant fancy are of no more avail than the power of conceiving a fine picture to one who cannot draw. There is as much difference between a beautiful idea floating vaguely in the brain, and the same idea reduced to form and shape, embodied in language at once definite and poetic, as between the rough unfinished outline of a lovely landscape and the same landscape transferred to the canvass by the hand of a Claude or a Salvator Rosa. That there are shades of thought and feeling too minute, too sublimated to admit of being pourtrayed in words may be true, as there are some tints of sun-rise or sun-set that no pencil, save it were dipped in hues of light, can reproduce; but these are the rare exceptions, and even then a poet who thoroughly understands his own bright imaginings will contrive to convey some idea of them to others.

It is all very well to sneer at "common-place critics", to assure us that whenever we do not understand any thing, the fault lies with ourselves, not with the writer. Such a view of the matter may be very creditable to our modesty, but would be destructive of all the rules of art.

Is poetry intended to be an unknown tongue? Is it meant only for the initiated few, who alone are to be permitted to enter the temple and penetrate into the sanctuary? Ought it not rather to be like nature itself, partaking indeed of almost every variety of form, sometimes sublime, sometimes simple, now towering aloft in solitary grandeur like the mighty mountain, now sweet and smiling as the sunny vale at its foot, now bright in sunshine, now veiled in shadow, but always, even when wrapped in clouds, preserving a clear distinct outline? In fact, the difference between thoughts which appear mystic only because to read their meaning demands greater powers of understanding, or deeper reflection than falls to the lot of ordinary minds, and those which are unintelligible because the author is wanting in skill to render them otherwise, is that in the first, attentive examination gradually penetrates, and at length entirely dissipates the haze which obscures them; while in the second, the longer and more carefully we examine, the more confused and indistinct do they become, till at last, as in a dissolving view, the colours melt into each other, and the whole disappears in one confused mass. The former, like all things really good and beautiful, court examination and come forth triumphant from the ordeal, the latter sink beneath it. "The finest poetry", says one who is himself both critic and poet,—our charming Delta—, as Christopher North calls him, "is that (whatever critical coteries may assert to the contrary, and it is exactly the same with painting and sculpture) which is most patent to the general understanding, and hence to



the approval or disapproval of the common sense of mankind".<sup>(1)</sup>

But if these observations hold good even in mere works of the imagination where so much is allowed to the play of fancy and the charm of melody, how much more do they apply to philosophical aphorisms, the aim of which, if they have any aim, must be to inform and to enlighten. If, which we can however rarely admit to be the case, it be at times permitted to the poet, in virtue of the "Faculty divine", to wander at his own sweet will and lose himself and his readers amid the luxuriance of his own bright creations, surely this indulgence cannot be extended to him who steps forward from the throng with the avowed intention, to teach, to correct and to guide humanity.

He can have no pretext for want of logical clearness, and nothing he may offer can in any way compensate for the absence of that quality without which all the rest are useless and dangerous. Since therefore it is not as a poet only that the partisans of Novalis claim for him universal admiration, we must venture to doubt whether these much-lauded "Aphorisms", when incomprehensible, really contain the extraordinary truths they have the reputation of embodying. Read the following, for instance, by no means the most excentric: "Water is a wet flame—The flame is of a bestial nature—Sadness is a symptom of secretion; Joy a symptom of nutrition—Is thinking really abstraction? then perhaps feeling is only devouring—

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(1) Möir's lectures on Poetical Literature.

That thought is also Galvanism, is probable enough. Much may be said both for and against it" &c.

It would be wronging Novalis, however, to let our readers suppose that his aphorisms are confined to such mystic axioms. Many are not only perfectly intelligible, but display a depth and elevation of thought worthy of the poet and the philosopher:

"Nature is an Eolian-harp whose tones strike keys of higher music within us. Music speaks an universal language by which the soul is moved to a indefinite degree. In those brief moments it feels itself in its real home.—Love and virtue, the future and the past, all stir within its depths.—Suffering distinguishes man from the brute creation.—Man is born to suffer and the more helpless he is, the more keenly is he sensible of the value of morality and religion.—Maladies, more especially when long and weary, are years of apprenticeship in the art of living and in the formation of character.—We must strive to improve by daily observation. Is not the life of the man of cultivated intellect a perpetual summons to learn? He lives for the future. His existence is a combat. The more we learn to reckon not by moments but by the course of time, the nobler do we become. The hasty irritability, the petty struggles of the mind change into a calm and comprehensive activity, into a glorious patience".

The "Pupil of Saïs" is an attempt, so far at least as we can discover any positive aim or end, to explain the wonders of nature by symbol and allegory. It is the most shadowy, the most unsubstantial of all Novalis's writings. Now and then we fancy we have discovered something tangible; but no sooner do we

approach it than it melts into empty air. Yet even here, amid much that is diffuse, unconnected and absurd we meet with images of exceeding beauty though few and far between".

"Men travel various paths. Whoever follows and compares them will behold strange figures around; figures which seem to belong to that cipher-writing which one every where meets with; on wings of birds, egg-shells, clouds, snow, in crystal, and on rocks of stone, on frozen water, in plants, animals, man, and the luminaries of heaven, on panes of pitch and glass and in the wonderful conjunctions of accident. In them we forbode the key to that wondrous writing the Grammar. But the presentiment will not form itself into any fixed shape, and seems resolved not to become a higher key. A spell seems cast on the senses; for a brief moment only, men understand their wishes, their thoughts condense themselves; thence arise their forebodings; but after a little space all swims before their eyes as before".

Who this teacher of Saïs is we are not informed. We are told that, as a child, he gazed perpetually upon the wide ocean of air; that he loved to gather stones, flowers and insects, and spread them out before him; that he sat on the sea-shore, collecting mussels; that as he grew up he wandered far away; that gradually he every-where found objects already known but wonderfully mingled, and often extraordinary things shaped themselves for him. "What chanced to him since then, he has not told us. Many of us have left him, have returned to their parents. One of these was still a child. He had large dark

eyes with a skin like lilies, and locks like the little light clouds that float on the sky towards evening. One day said our teacher he will return, and then our lessons must end; and with him he sent one for whom we have often felt pity; he always looked sad, and though he had been years with us, nothing ever succeeded with him. He could only perceive objects dimly and at a distance. He was so apt to break every thing; yet none felt more pleasure or evinced more eagerness to learn and listen. At length, it was before that fair child appeared among us, he became all at once clever and cheerful. One morning he had left us sad. Night arrived, but he returned not, at last towards morning we heard his voice from a neighbouring wood. It was a loud joyful lay that he was singing, and our teacher with a glance, such as I never shall behold in him again, looked towards the east. Soon the singer approached us and with an expression of unutterable joy upon his face presented a simple-looking little stone, but of peculiar shape. The teacher took it in his hand and kissed it long and earnestly; then gazed at us with eyes wet with tears, laid this little stone upon an empty space in the midst of many other stones where several rows of them met together like so many radii. Never shall I forget that instant. We felt as though a wondrous world was suddenly opened to our view".

Now perhaps, as one of our own most illustrious writers observes, "there is more in this than meets the ear". If so, we can only regret our own obtuseness; but we console ourselves by the comfortable conviction that we do not stand alone in this predicament,

and that it is shared by almost all the German critics of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Living almost exclusively in the atmosphere of abstraction and ideality, Novalis frequently loses himself in those boundless regions, so as no longer even to afford a clue to those who fain would follow him in his flight. The question naturally arises what after all was his philosophy? In general, the perusal of a man's writings sets all dispute as to his opinions at rest; but those of Novalis leave us almost as much in the dark as they found us. As far, however, as we can make out, we have reason to believe he was a disciple of Fichte, although, as Tieck observes, "He endeavoured to open for himself a new path, to unite philosophy with religion". His own naturally-thoughtful mind, saddened by early sorrows, was particularly fitted to receive pious impressions; but it is evident that his creed was deeply tainted with that pernicious mysticism which invents difficulties where none really exist and, while affecting to elucidate, in reality adds tenfold darkness to those mysteries inseparable from all religious problems.

We turn with pleasure from Novalis's prose works to his sacred poems which, in their beautiful and unadorned simplicity and deep fervour, offer a singular contrast to his other productions.

#### THE ANGEL OF CONSOLATION.

When in hours of pain and anguish  
Grief has torn the aching heart,  
When beneath disease we languish,  
Trembling at death's threatening dart;

When we think on those who love us  
Bow'd perchance 'neath care and fear,  
Darkness reigns around, above us,  
Which no ray of hope may cheer.

Oh! then God himself bends o'er us,  
And his love illumines the night,  
While his angel stands before us,  
When we long for realms of light,

Life's fresh cup he deigns to proffer  
Whispers courage, hope and rest;  
Nor in vain our prayers we offer  
For the beings we love best.

## HYMN.

There are dark hours of sadness,  
Dark hours of hopeless pain,  
When thoughts akin to madness  
Flash wildly through the brain;

When nameless anguish presses  
The heart beyond control,  
And deepest gloom possesses  
The faint and trembling soul;

When every prop seems taken,  
From life's receding shore,  
And the mind tempest-shaken  
Obeys the will no more.

But who from yonder Heaven  
Pities each earthly woe,  
Who yonder Cross hath given  
For every grief below?

Thine arms around it twining  
 To hope and prayer give room;  
 For there a flame is shining  
 To light thy path of gloom.

An angel-form advances  
 And leads thee to that strand  
 Whence thy delighted glances  
 May see the promis'd land. <sup>(1)</sup>

One of the most celebrated of the romantic school, although not among its immediate founders, is Frederic Baron de la Motte Fouqué, nephew to the well-known General of that name. Like his uncle, he pursued the military career, served as lieutenant in the "War of Freedom", and when his country had broken its fetters, retired to spend the remainder of his life in rural tranquillity. <sup>(2)</sup> Had all his works equalled his "Undine", Fouqué would have stood almost unrivalled as a poet of the purely imaginative order. This work, so well-known by translations to English readers, is not indeed in verse; but every line is redolent with true poetic spirit. Nothing can exceed the skill with which the real and the ideal are mingled like the woof and warf of some exquisite tissue. The idea was perhaps suggested by one of those traditions in which, as we have already seen, the ancient fairy mythology of Germany abounded. A noble knight, Peter of Staufenberg, while resting a moment beside a cool stream, had beheld a lovely female form seated on the flowery banks. Her wondrous

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(1) The latest edition of Novalis's works was published in 1841.

(2) „Lebensgeschichte," von La Motte Fouqué.

beauty enthralled his heart, and he had little difficulty in winning her as his bride; for, as our readers will remember, it was only by this union with a being of mortal mould that the spirits of air or water could obtain the gift of a soul — a touching superstition pregnant with deep meaning. Ere bestowing her hand on her earthly lover, however, the Undine reminded him that the relentless laws of her race condemned her to become herself the instrument of his destruction if he broke his plighted vow. The knight accepted the condition and for years remained true to his beauteous wife; but, at length, wearying of her charms and forgetting her warning, he sought the daughter of a neighbouring baron for his bride. The wedding was celebrated with due splendour; but in the midst of the bridal-festival the faithless knight beheld from the ceiling a little white foot — a strange apparition — announcing his doom. In a few moments he had ceased to exist. Invisible to all save him, the Undine had strangled him in a passionate embrace.

The influences conjured up in this charming tale belong to an imaginary world. We have spirits of the waters in the guise of old men and lovely maidens, and from the commencement we are dimly conscious that we are dwelling in a supernatural region — yet so admirably is human interest blended with the vague and mystic, that we never feel the absence of reality in the picture. The actors are not mere personified abstractions. All, save “Undine”, are living and breathing men and women, creatures of flesh and blood with earthly passions and earthly emotions. What can be truer to nature



than the portraits of the old fisherman and his wife, the fair haughty Bertalda, the valiant, generous but inconstant Hildebrandt. "Undine" herself is not only the most delicious fairy-being the imagination of poet or painter ever conjured up; she is likewise the loving, tender, devoted woman. With the gift of a soul which, by her union with a man of mortal mould she can alone obtain, she has become subjected to all our griefs, to all our sufferings, and when, forced by the inexorable commands of the race of spirits, she destroys by a kiss the husband she adores, we can scarcely refrain from mingling our tears with hers.

The rapturous applause which hailed "Undine" was unfortunate for the author. His vein of fancy was rich and glowing, but it was not profound. It was soon exhausted. Yet he continued writing romance after romance of the same nature, till even the German public, despite its love for the ideal and wonderful, turned in weariness from the endless succession of mailed knights and beauteous damsels—half women—half spirits, and longed for something more real and tangible. The enthusiasm for the Middle Ages, for ruined castles, for feudal towers, troubadours and ladies fair, declined as rapidly as it had arisen. The taste for purely romantic compositions, indeed, must always be confined to a small class. That poetry which deals with the affections of the human heart, the springs of human action, the everyday joys and sorrows of existence can alone command the lasting and wide-spreading sympathies of mankind. In this the poets of the school before us are too often deficient. As a lyrist, however, Fouqué

may lay claim to high eulogy. His poems, generally speaking, while imaginative, graceful and melodious are impressed with a genuine spirit of pure hopeful piety, very different from the dreamy spirituality of most of his contemporaries.

#### THE OCTOGENARIAN.

Thou too, the myrtle in thine hair,  
Knelt at the altar young and fair,  
    Blooming and fresh as May,  
With flowerets crowned, with radiant glance,  
Thou too hast mingled in the dance,  
    The gayest of the gay.

Alas! those cheeks, how faded now!  
How sunk those eyes, how pale that brow!  
    Whether spring deck the plain,  
Or yellow autumn gild the earth,  
Still half-asleep beside the hearth  
    Thou ever must remain.

And yet one breath! thine ills are flown,  
Thou stand'st an angel at the throne  
    Of thine almighty Lord.  
Weary and narrow is the way,  
Strong the temptations thence to stray,  
    But glorious the reward!

#### CONSOLATION.

If every earthly blessing  
Were shower'd upon thee here,  
If every joy possessing  
Thou ne'er hadst shed a tear,

How fondly wouldst thou cherish  
This world of light and gloom!

How couldst thou bear to perish,  
To sink into the tomb?

But still, thy hopes beguiling  
Full many a bond is riven,  
And thou canst wander smiling,  
Through the dark grave to Heaven.

The links are gently broken,  
The pang is mild and soft —  
This hath been often spoken,  
But never yet too oft.

Let us now, for a few moments, glance at one whose verses little known beyond his own country, continue popular with all the youth of Germany, and whose life and letters have just been published in a new and enlarged edition. <sup>(1)</sup> We often see love playing a prominent part in the career of poets. Endowed with keener sensibilities than ordinary men, the poet must naturally be more alive to its influence. But it is rare, indeed, to find it the all-engrossing, all-absorbing passion of an existence. Yet so it was with Ernest Schulze. If aught else shared this devotion to the mistress of his destiny, it was poetry. Indeed, in his heart they were inseparably blended. His childhood and early youth offer no remarkable incident. When but eighteen, he composed "Psyche", a production of considerable length, already displaying the merits and the defects of all his subsequent compositions, a rich glowing imagination and brilliant fancy, the fascination of which is destroyed by tedious-

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(1) *Leben und Briefe von Ernst Schulze*. 1857. Vilmar regards his verses as among the most melodious of modern poetry, p. 681.

ness, diffuseness and occasional affectation. It was about the same time that he beheld her who was henceforth to occupy his every thought, and some of the little poems in which he celebrates his love are full of warmth and sweetness and tinged with a soft and pleasing melancholy.

#### THE LARK AND THE NIGHTINGALE.

Oh! lark, why sing'st thou 'mid the morning air  
Thy joyous notes so free from earthly care?

#### LARK.

Because the sun pours down his radiance bright,  
And brook and flower are sparkling in his light;  
Because each blossom glistens in the dew,  
And every bud puts forth its rosy hue;  
Because the butterflies dance on the breeze,  
And round the violet sport the honey-bees;  
Because I joy in life and love and spring,  
Therefore with gladsome heart I gaily sing.

Why dost thou pour, oh! tender nightingale,  
Amid the twilight-gloom thy tender wail?

#### NIGHTINGALE.

Because in glory sets the orb of day,  
And all his splendour softly melts away;  
Because bright hues are fading from the skies,  
The flow'rets close their leaves, their perfume dies;  
Because the wind pours forth its mournful song,  
And the brook sighs while hurrying swift along;  
Because for the beloved I make my moan,  
Therefore I sing so sadly and alone.

This bright spring of love and bliss was soon to  
fade. The fair object of the poet's day-dreams fell

into a decline and, after lingering nearly a year, during which her lover watched by her sick couch with unwearied tenderness, died in his arms. This terrible blow seemed utterly to crush the sensitive heart of the young lover. For a time his anguish rendered him incapable of any mental exertion; but at length he determined to seek solace in the composition of a poem of which she was to be alike the object and the inspiration. In this poem which he commenced in January 1831, all his powers of mind appeared concentrated; his rapidly declining health, indeed, warned him that the time allotted for his self-imposed duty was but short. "He confined his grief to his own soul", says Bouterwek, "read and studied as before; but the only object that really interested him was the completion of 'Cäcilia', or of occasional poems, most of which bear reference to the loss he had sustained." (1) The work had advanced as far as the eighth canto, when the War of Liberation in 1813 awoke him from his apathy and drew him forth for a while to take part in the universal rising of his countrymen. But even in this resolution his love largely mingled; for he was moved to it only by the fear that he should be unworthy to sing the praises of his adored if he refused to serve his country in the hour of peril. Some of the poems he composed in the first flush of martial ardour exhibit a fire and vigour which, had his life been spared, gave promise of better things hereafter, and are still among the favourite student-songs in Germany. For instance:

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(1) Bouterwek, *Poesie und Berchtsamkeit*.

## THE BLACK JÄGER.

What is gleaming so gaily on bush and on brae,  
What is shining in green-wood so bright,  
Who comes forth from the wood in such gallant array,  
Who are rushing from mountain and height?  
'Tis the Jägers! on, on in a torrent we flow,  
And rush to the combat and pounce on the foe  
To battle, to vict'ry — to triumph we go!

We come from the Hartz and its forests so old,  
Full, they tell us, of glittering store;  
But what do we care or for silver or gold?  
Give us freedom! we ask for no more!  
To others we leave it — More nobly we feel;  
We don our bright armour, our cuirass of steel;  
For us upon earth the sword only has worth,  
And we care for nought save our fatherland's weal!

To drink and to love and be loved has its charms;  
In the shade it is pleasant to dream;  
But nobler to rush 'mid the battles alarms,  
When the sword and the bayonet gleam.  
Love's torch is not brighter than glory's proud hue,  
And where thousands are sleeping why we may sleep too.  
As heroes we'll fall! 'neath the sword or the ball,  
And pour forth our hearts-blood so gallant and true.

Full oft in the darkness, in forest and glen,  
Or high on the storm-beaten rock,  
We have linger'd to track the fierce wolf to his den  
Nor dreaded the hurricane's shock.  
And now the bright sun-shine is streaming above us;  
We go to defend all we love! all who love us!  
Be it battle or chase — in the enemy's face —  
To us it is one; for no peril can move us!

Schulze entered as a volunteer in the battalion of Jägers in the spring of 1814; and was soon distin-

guished by his commander who perceiving his mental superiority employed him as his secretary and evinced towards him the utmost kindness. Thus thrown amid new scenes, engaged in active duties, Schulze's health both of mind and body seemed to improve, and his friends began to hope that time would reconcile him to the will of Providence, that, like Klopstock, Novalis and so many others, his heart would learn, if not to forget, at least to endure. But it was destined otherwise. In 1814 Davoust evacuated Hamburg, and Schulze marched with his battalion in triumph into that city. Peace followed, an unfortunate event for the poor youth as it allowed him once more time to brood over his past sorrows. He returned to Göttingen which peopled by so many painful recollections was no fitting home for his morbidly sensitive spirit; the stirring scenes of war and the blast of the trumpet had aroused him indeed for a while, but only, as it proved, to leave him a prey to deeper dejection when their brief spell was broken. He now recommenced his "Cecilia", and with the resumption of this task, so closely connected with the remembrance of his loved and lost one, all his despondency of mind and suffering of body returned.

The "Cecilia" was at last finished in December 1815. As the poem is little known in England, we give a brief detail of the plan. The wife of a mighty northern king has secretly adopted Christianity, while her lord remains in the darkness of Paganism. She keeps her conversion a profound secret. Two lovely boys, twins, are her only joy. While watching beside their cradle, an angel sent by the Virgin-mother de-

scends to cheer her and presents her a rose of costly gems, with the assurance that so long as she retains possession of this precious flower, neither guile nor force shall prevail against her. For a time all goes well; but at length, the foul enchantress Swanwitha, who plays a very important part in the poem and is invested with all sorts of terrible attributes, after evoking a terrific tempest, appears in a hideous form beside the cradle where the Queen is sitting, and seizing the babes threatens them with instant death if the precious rose is not delivered up to her hands. The distracted mother forgets the promise of her celestial visitor and sacrifices the rose to save her children. At the same moment the fictitious horrors vanish, and the same angelic being who had bestowed the boon appears in mingled grief and anger, reproaching the unfortunate mother for her want of faith, though the circumstances were, one would suppose, more than sufficient to excuse her. At the same time she announces the fearful penalties attached to the loss of the precious flower, the death of the queen's husband, the ruin of her country and the loss of her children who are carried off by the malignant sorceress, and her own exclusion from the kingdom of bliss, until the rose already conveyed by unhallowed hands to Odin's temple should be restored to the followers of Christ, an action which is to entail the death of him who attempts it. This, although the main argument of the poem, comes to our knowledge only incidentally in the course of the narrative, after we have perused some nine or ten highly-wrought and truly poetical, but still very wearisome cantos.



recounting the lofty exploits, fearful struggles and virtuous self-sacrifice of the hero. This hero is no other than that son of the unfortunate princess, who has been brought up in the Christian faith and is destined to redeem his mother from her place of punishment by regaining the fatal rose. In these efforts he is aided by the heroine, Cecilia, to whom he is devoted with the purest and most platonic passion, which she returns with love equally holy and spotless. If this story had been condensed into a moderate compass, and the *dramatis personæ* thought, felt and acted a little more like ordinary beings, it might, notwithstanding the marvellous incidents on which it is based, have excited our sympathy; but it is so intolerably tedious, the characters have so little truth of delineation, and that of Cecilia in particular is so utterly devoid of all human interest, that the reader remains untouched by her dangers or her virtues. Then the long episodes, the endless prayers and invocations produce an impression of utter weariness. Yet this singular poem is replete with a wealth of imagery, a splendour of fancy rarely found even in poets of a far higher order, and which only lead us to regret that such precious gifts should not have been subjected to the control of reason and reflexion, instead of being allowed like weeds in a rich but neglected garden, to choke up the soil with their unpruned luxuriance. The versification is particularly melodious, and many of the battle-scenes are described with great spirit and felicity.

The following extract will give an idea of some of its softer beauties.

## THE ADIEU.

'T is o'er! the work so holy and so dear,  
Sole recompense of years of grief and gloom,  
It was begun, beloved, on thy bier.  
And now I lay the offering on thy tomb.  
There mirror'd stands each groan, each bursting tear.  
Each pang that rent my heart for thy sad doom,  
Oh take the lay though humble be its worth.  
It is my last, my only joy on earth!

As mariners some flowery heights desery  
On a strange shore, and joyfully descend  
Where towers and crowded cities glad their eye  
And bowery wood and vale their beauties blend,  
Till o'er the main once more their vessel fly,  
And every trace of the bright dream must end,  
So in the distance I, with aching heart,  
Behold the vision fly and hope depart.

E'en as thou wert in life, or grave or gay,  
In bliss or grief, in pleasure or in pain,  
Such have I sought to paint thee in my lay  
And link thy beauties with this simple strain.  
Thine image was before me night and day.  
At length, thy hand in mine, the goal I gain.  
Oh! must the sweet delusion vanish now.  
E'en as thou bind'st the wreath upon my brow.

Three years have passed, with that dear vision rife,  
And though the storm of fate raged far and wide,  
And though full many a varied scene of life  
Bore my frail bark upon its foaming tide,

I scarcely heard the angry billows' strife,  
Nor marked the clouds in murky darkness ride.  
With thee and thee alone was every thought,  
With thy dear image was my memory fraught.

And as the time rolled on with changing hue,  
Thou wert the day-star still that o'er me shone,  
The thought of thee nerv'd this frail arm anew,  
And every dream of peace was all thine own.  
My heart hath deeply bled and suffered—true,  
I taught myself to bear though sad and lone,  
Lest, were I gone, cold autumn's blast should chill  
The roses blooming on thy funeral hill.

Since thy pure spirit sought a brighter shore,  
I felt me but a lonely stranger here.  
Life and its hopes can charm my soul no more;  
I live with thee and thy remembrance dear.  
Faithless or cold is many a friend of yore,  
And few remain my lonely path to cheer;  
In silence have I born the world's cold gaze  
Wrapt in the thought of thee and happier days.

As round a vase where costly odours lay  
Still clings, when they are gone, their rich perfume,  
As clouds once gilded by the evening ray  
Retain their hues amid the deepening gloom,  
As the swift river rushes far away  
Into the distant ocean's mighty womb,  
The heart bound up in thee and in thy fate  
Must be a stranger unto rage or hate.

What though my youthful life will soon be flown,  
Uncheered by joy or love, save one bright gleam,  
Full many a flower must perish yet unblown,  
And unfulfilled must vanish many a dream,

I gave myself to thee, I am thine own.  
My life flows on like some rejoicing stream.  
Spring-time but once can glad the human heart;  
Its scent remains e'en when its hues depart.

With the completion of his long-cherished task Schulze's failing health rapidly decayed, and his state became so alarming that his father, despite his narrow finances, insisted on his leaving Göttingen and repairing to Italy, as a last chance of restoration. A temporary revival, however, induced the youth to delay the journey and to amuse himself with wandering along the banks of the Main and Rhine, in the hopes that change of scene would be a sufficient cure; in this he found himself mistaken. The disease returned with increased violence; but his passionate love of poetry remained undiminished, and a prize being offered at Leipsic for the best poetic tale, he commenced "The Enchanted Rose" and completed it in time to gain the medal.

The "Enchanted Rose" is in a lighter and gayer style than the "Cecilia", but has the same want of human interest, the personages being all cast among the inhabitants of fairy land, and having too little in common with ordinary mortals to excite any very great sympathy. Schulze survived the completion of this poem but a brief period. In the spring he was removed to his father's house at Celle; but the journey exhausted his little remaining strength, and he died on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of June at the age of twenty-eight. When we consider the briefness of his career, the depth of melancholy which oppressed him during the greater

period of his existence, we shall be astonished, not that he did so little, but that under such circumstances he accomplished so much. The faults that pervade his poems are those incidental to a warm and luxuriant imagination, and would probably have been corrected by the influence of mature thought and careful study. (1)

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(1) *Leben, Briefe und Gedichte von Ernst Schulze*. 1857.

## CHAPTER X.

HOELDERLIN. CHAMISSO. MATTHISSON. KOSEGARTEN.  
SALIS. KÖRNER. ARNDT.

HOELDERLIN.—ROMANTIC STORY.—SUFFERINGS.—MELANCHOLY  
FATE.—DEATH.—POEMS "GREECE".—CHAMISSO.—HIS BIRTH AND  
FAMILY.—HIS YOUTH.—WAR WITH FRANCE.—PAINFUL AND AM-  
BIGUOUS POSITION.—HIS CONDUCT.—RESTLESS SPIRIT.—AP-  
POINTMENT AS PROFESSOR OF THE LYCÉE NAPOLEÓN IN FRANCE  
—ACQUAINTANCE WITH MADAME DE STAEL.—RETURN TO GERMANY  
—MARRIAGE.—DEATH.—POEMS "THE TWO SISTERS"—"ABDALLAH"  
"THE OLD WASHERWOMAN".—MATTHISSON.—KOSEGARTEN.—SA-  
LIS.—THEIR POEMS.—REVIEW OF THE ROMANTIC LYRIC SCHOOL  
IN GERMANY.—KÖRNER.—BRIEF AND GLOAMING'S CAREER.—POEMS  
—ARNDT.—PATRIOTIC POEMS.

THE name of Hölderlin is known probably to few  
of our readers; but in Germany his verses have many  
warm admirers, while his melancholy fate has invested  
him with a certain romantic interest. Unlike his  
brother-disciples of the same school, Hölderlin sought  
to blend the spirit of antiquity with that of the  
Middle Ages. In this attempt he failed. To unite the  
serene majesty, the serene beauty, the perfect sym-  
metry, the grandiose simplicity of Grecian poetry to

the melodramatic interest, the metaphysical philosophy of the romantic school, was a task far beyond his powers. But there is a tenderness, a delicacy, a certain purity of outline in his productions which remind us, though faintly, of his great friend and master, Schiller who, it is well known, was very fond of his verse and called him his "Lieber Schwabe".

Hölderlin was of humble but respectable parentage. He was born in 1770 at Heilbronn on the banks of the haunted Neckar. His early history would be but a repetition of that of Voss, Hoelty &c. At college, he attracted attention by his talents and excellent conduct. In 1773 he entered the family of Charlotte von Kalb, whose name, associated as it is with that of Schiller, is doubtless familiar to our readers, and, as tutor to her sons, shortly afterwards accompanied her to Jena. Here he made the acquaintance of Schiller, then Professor of History at the University. Pleased by his amiable manners and evident mental superiority, the great poet gave him a kind and cordial welcome. Circumstances of a domestic character compelled Hölderlin to quit the family of Mad<sup>me</sup> von Kalb, and he was thrown on his own resources which were of a most limited description. His friends procured him a post similar to that he had resigned, in the house of a wealthy banker of Frankfort. Here he met with an amicable reception, more especially from the mother of his pupils, a young and lovely woman gifted with every charm of mind and person. When Hölderlin entered the family, the "fair Susette", as she was usually called, was still suffering under deep depression from the recent death of a beloved mother. Her husband, an excellent man

in his way, was too fully occupied with his commercial affairs to devote much time or attention to the training of his children, which he confided entirely to his gifted and accomplished wife. "No one understands the course of the stock-exchange better than I do", he was wont to say, "but how children should be brought up, and what they should learn, that is not my affair—that I leave to their mother". Feeling the responsibility of her little ones' education resting on her alone, it was but natural that Susette should seek to become intimately acquainted with the character and talents of the man to whose charge they were intrusted. Her mornings were generally passed in the school-room. She accompanied the tutor and her children in their walks, and in the evening, which the banker usually spent at the Casino playing whist or billiards, a practice too common among husbands in Germany, the young tutor would while away the time by reading aloud or conversing upon literary topics. In all this there was no tinge of evil on either side; both were pure in thought and deed, and if some of Hölderlins poems addressed to "Diotina", as he calls her, seem to indicate feelings of a warmer nature, it is certain they were not only confined to his own breast, but never even found vent in words. The banker, who was sincerely attached to his wife and was conscious that she must often feel sad and lonely, not only perfectly approved this literary intercourse, but expressed his pleasure that she should at length have found somebody who could amuse her. But this sunny atmosphere was soon disturbed by a fearful storm. In the establishment was



a person who occupied a position between a humble companion and housekeeper. Young, pretty and coquettish, of a highly respectable family, she deemed herself in all respects the equal of a poor professor, and, struck by his good looks and graceful manners, had early formed the plan of winning his heart and hand. Of this scheme Hölderlin was perfectly unconscious, and his indifference stung the vain and self-willed girl to the quick. She attributed his coldness to a passion for another and fairer object, and vowed revenge. She knew her master; she knew that he was generous, kind-hearted and confiding to a certain degree, but that if once roused to doubt or jealousy, he forgot all the bounds of good sense and reason. On this knowledge she acted. She contrived herself to open the door for him and to his stereotype question: Is my wife at home? invariably replied: Herr Hölderlin is reading to her. For some time, this reply did not produce the expected effect; but at length the peculiar tone, the look, the manner attracted the banker's attention. One day in particular he returned home in a very ill-humour, and on hearing as usual that the tutor was with his wife, he rushed furiously into the apartment where, unsuspecting of evil, the young man was sitting reading aloud a new publication, while Susette, one of her children at her knee, was engaged in some female employment. The sight of this tranquil domestic picture only increased the fury of the misguided husband, and a scene ensued which probably would have terminated in some fearful tragedy had not a glance at the terrified Susette recalled Hölderlin to his com-

posure and his dignity. Instantly leaving the chamber he packed up his scanty wardrobe, and that very evening left the house where he had enjoyed so many happy hours. His departure, however, threatened to make matters worse instead of better. Mad<sup>me</sup> F— wounded at once in her pride and her sense of virtue, insisted that he should be recalled, at least for a time, declaring that otherwise she would leave her husband's roof for ever. The banker who, so soon as his momentary fit of passion was over, had at once felt and acknowledged his error, found himself in a sad dilemma. A reconciliation on less humiliating terms was at length effected; but the offended and sensitive wife never recovered her former serene gaiety; her health became delicate, and not very long afterwards, in 1802, she sank into a premature grave, the victim of a disease caught while attending her sick children.<sup>(1)</sup> Hölderlin meanwhile directed his steps to Hamburg where sad and indignant he resided for some time in complete retirement. By slow degrees he roused himself from this state of apathy, and returned to his poetic labours. Goethe had happened to visit Frankfurt while the young man resided there, and had more than once admitted him to his presence and treated him with considerate kindness. "Yesterday", he writes to Schiller the 23<sup>rd</sup> August, "Hölderlin was with me. He looked rather sad and melancholy; but he is really amiable and modest even to bashfulness. He handled

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(1) Bruchstücke aus den Erinnerungen und Familienpapieren eines Stenographen. Frankfurt 1857.

various materials in a manner which betrayed your school; many important ideas he has made his own. I have advised him to compose short poems, and to choose for each a subject interesting to humanity at large. He seems to have some inclination for the Middle Ages, in which I cannot strengthen him."—"It is true", replies Schiller, "that I find in these poems much of my former manner, and it is not the first time that the author has reminded me of myself."

Despite his growing dejection Hölderlin was not so completely absorbed in his own sorrows, as to be absolutely insensible to the happiness or misery of his native soil. A passionate lover of freedom, he had hailed with delight the dawn of the French revolution. He had trusted that the tree of liberty once firmly planted would extend its beneficent shade over every neighbouring land. He had not foreseen that beneath those sacred branches every imaginable crime was to be committed, that its soil was to be watered by the best and purest blood of the nation. Hölderlin saw his bright hopes destroyed. His country was no nearer those constitutional rights he so fondly desired than before, while abroad she was humbled and defeated. He had neither the prophetic glance which amid gathering clouds can discern the dim horizon of better days, nor the firm resolute spirit which can bear every trial unmoved, and he turned away from the gloomy present to bury himself in dreams of a by-gone age and a brighter clime. The poem entitled "Greece" displays this singular mixture of feelings. To whom it is addressed has not been ascertained.

## GREECE.

Had we met on Athen's sacred ground  
Where ambition fired the soul of youth,  
Where mid clustering flowers the Illiasus wound,  
Where Socrates won all hearts to truth,

Where Aspasia roved 'mid myrtle bowers,  
Where the blithesome sounds of joy and mirth  
From the Agora, marked the rapid hours,  
Where Plato formed a Paradise on earth!

Where from inspiration's sparkling fountain  
Flowed the hymn of harmony divine,  
Where on blue-ey'd Pallas' sacred mountain  
Pilgrims bent before the goddess' shrine,

Where the hours unheeded glided by  
Wrapt in dreams so beautiful, so fair.  
In those realms of bliss to live — to die —  
Ah! my friend, had I but met thee there!

Nobler themes had then thy song inspired,  
Marathon — its heroes — they alone —  
And my soul with kindred ardour fired,  
Had been a worthy minstrel, of thine own.

Then, all-burning from the glorious strife,  
With the laurel round thy youthful brow,  
Ne'er beneath the weary load of life  
Had I seen that lofty spirit bow!

Is the star of love for ever banish'd  
To a fairer sky a brighter clime?  
And those golden hours are they too vanished  
Whose soft wings conceal'd the flight of time?

Ah! in Athens like the immortal fire,  
Hope and joy still dwelt in every breast,  
Like the golden fruit, youth's sweet desire  
Still was fresh and beautiful and blest.

If amid those proud and happy plains  
Destiny had placed thy proud career —  
She was worthy thy inspiring strains,  
They are useless, worse than useless here —

In those better days so bright, so fleet,  
We had formed a proud and patriot band.  
Not in vain that noble heart had beat  
For the freedom of thy native-land.

Pause awhile — methinks the hour arrives,  
When the ethereal spark may burn anew —  
Perish! not a single hope survives;  
This is not thy sphere, thou brave and true!

Attica! alas! the giant falls,  
Where the sons of Gods and heroes sleep;  
Rent and ruined are the marble halls;  
Silence broods there, silence — stern and deep.

Smiling spring descends with balmy gale,  
But finds neither flower, nor leaf, nor tree.  
Cold and barren is that sacred vale  
Where the Ilissus once flowed bright and free.

Oh! I long to quit this land of gloom  
For Alcæus or Anacreon.  
Gladly would I sleep within the tomb,  
With the holy ones of Marathon.

Be these tears my eyes so often shed  
For thy land, oh, sacred Greece! the last.  
Fates, in mercy, cut my mingled thread;  
For my heart belongeth to the past.

To the past indeed — for with the present, its storms  
and trials, poor Hölderlin was utterly incapable of  
coping. That he possessed the germs of far higher

poetic excellence than he ever really achieved, can scarcely be doubted. But the deep melancholy, the profound discouragement which oppressed him, the result of a diseased temperament, of a morbid sensibility, perhaps too of a secret and suppressed passion nipped all his promise in the bud. Had his genius been of a loftier order, had his mind been early subjected to a more rigorous discipline, he might—like so many others—have come forth victorious from the struggle. As it was, he sunk beneath it. Poverty too pressed heavily upon him. Its rude blasts were too severe for his frail and delicate nature. For a time he wandered from spot to spot, supporting himself as he best could by writing contributions for the periodicals; for his poems, though much admired, were not of a nature to obtain popularity. At length, the absolute necessity of providing for the daily wants of existence roused him to exertion. He entered the family of the Hamburg consul at Bordeaux as tutor, and for awhile appeared tranquil and contented. His friends began to have hopes for the future, when suddenly his letters ceased. Months passed away and all they heard of him was that he had quitted his situation, and no one knew what had become of him. All at once he appeared before his mother in a state of mind and body equally deplorable. Watchful care and kindness, however, restored him; but the dawn of incipient insanity was too clearly visible. The news of the death of Mad<sup>me</sup> F— deepened his melancholy, and in 1806 it became necessary to place him under medical superintendence. In this condition he lingered six-and-thirty years; often unconscious of all around

him, at other times calm, and even gay, but with few perfectly lucid intervals. He died in 1843. Life to him had been, for many years, one long feverish dream, and then a fearful blank, and even those who wept over his grave could scarcely lament his release. <sup>(1)</sup>.

Far superior in strength, vigour and real poetic endowments to Schulze or Hölderlin, is Louis Carl Chamisso, still one of the most popular of lyrical poets in the land of his adoption, for he was not of German birth. He was born in the year 1781 at the Castle of Boncour, in Champagne, of a noble line of Lorraine allied to many reigning houses. A sword presented by Marshal Villiers to the grandfather of Chamisso as a mark of esteem for an act of daring valour performed at the age of fifteen, is still in the possession of the family, together with another far more precious, a token of gratitude from the unfortunate Louis the 16<sup>th</sup>. Chamisso's elder brothers were in the garde du corps. They were by the monarch's side on the eventful 10<sup>th</sup> of August and were wounded in his defence. Shortly afterwards they received from the hands of the king a sword, he himself had worn, with the following paper: "I recommend to my brother, Mr. Chamisso one of my most faithful servants who has several times exposed his life for mine." This paper the unhappy Prince concealed beneath his coat for some days, and at length availing himself of an instant when he was unobserved, presented

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(1) Leben und Werke von Hölderlin, von Schwab. Stuttgart 1846.  
Hölderlin's Gedichte. Stuttgart 1847.

it to the elder Chamisso who was still about his person. A day or two afterwards the brothers were separated from their royal master together with the rest of his attendants, and never beheld him more.

Of Chamisso's childhood little is known—he was thoughtful and silent, loving to retire from his playmates and indulge uninterruptedly his own reveries. "I sought for insects", he says himself, "and often passed the stormy nights at the open window, wondering and admiring." He had scarcely attained his ninth year, when the fury of the French revolution compelled his parents to seek refuge in another land. They selected the south of Germany and remained for many years at Würzburg, where Louis pursued his studies with assiduity and success. At the age of fifteen he was appointed page to the Queen of Prussia, and at seventeen entered the military service of that country. In 1801, a decree of Napoleon permitting the return of the emigrants, Chamisso's family retraced their steps to France, leaving the youth in Germany which he regarded as his home. Their departure left him sad and lonely. To console himself he fell in love with a young French widow, Ceres Duvernoy, pretty, gay and coquettish. She treated her adorer with mingled kindness and scorn—now seeming to accept his timid homage, now turning contemptuously away. His position indeed was too humble, his pecuniary resources too limited to satisfy the fair and luxurious Parisian, and she ended by refusing his suit. Happily this passion was one of those which breaks no hearts. Chamisso diverted his thoughts by literary pursuits



and by the society of some congenial spirits, among others of Varnhagen von Ense, husband to the well-known Rahel, and himself an agreeable writer.

The war which had broken out between France and Prussia summoned the young soldier from his studious leisure to sterner work.—For the first time he realized his painful and ambiguous position. He was a Frenchman—and in the service of that very power with which his country was engaged in deadly strife. He had received from the King of Prussia much personal kindness. He had quitted France in early childhood. His family—devoted royalists—detested Napoleon, and the youth shared their feeling. In quitting the Prussian service he must have sacrificed all his hopes of worldly prosperity. The struggle was violent but brief. He forgot that, however guilty, our native land should still be sacred in the eyes of her sons, and in an evil hour he drew his sword in what he regarded as the sacred cause of virtue and freedom. But he had little opportunity of displaying his warlike zeal. He was among the garrison of the Fortress of Hamlin, when taken by the French, and was compelled, with the rest of the officers, to pledge his honour not to serve again during the war. This humiliating catastrophe filled him with grief not unmingled with something like remorse: as he himself confesses in a letter to his biographer<sup>(1)</sup>, he could not help regarding it as a sort of retribution for having raised his sword against the land that gave him birth. His military career thus abruptly

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(1) *Leben und Briefe von Chamisso*, von Fißig. 1847.

terminated, Chamisso seems for a time to have led a life of complete retirement—occupying himself in reading and study, though in a very desultory manner. Prussia, vanquished and humbled, was forced to conclude a disadvantageous peace, and Chamisso availed himself of the opportunity to visit his native land. But his parents were no more, and everything seemed strange and painful to him.

“I am German”, he writes, “heart and soul, and cannot feel myself at home here”. After lingering some years in France, always restless and discontented, he resolved to return to that land to which were attached all the associations of his youth, and accordingly set out once more for Germany. But here again he was doomed to disappointment. Most of his friends were absent, and the joyous brotherhood which had gathered around him as its centre was severed and dispersed. He remained for three years wandering from spot to spot, without any regular occupation, oppressed by a sense of weariness and uncertainty which operated most deleteriously on his mental and physical powers, and at length retraced his steps to his native soil where he obtained the post of Professor of Literature in the gymnasium at Napoleonville lately founded by the emperor in la Vendée. Here he made the acquaintance of Mr. de Barante since become celebrated by his “Histoire des Ducs de Bourgogne”, and of Mad<sup>me</sup> de Staël, then inhabiting the Chateau de Chaumont on the left bank of the Loire. Chamisso found a cordial welcome, and minds congenial to his own; but his shy and reserved habits and German *heaviness*, as he himself calls

it, made him rather dazzled than charmed by the brilliant society into which he found himself suddenly introduced. He thus describes the impression made on him by Mad<sup>me</sup> de Staël. "She is an extraordinary woman and pleases me much more than the German Schlegel. She has a truer comprehension of life, though she understands less how to describe it; she has more animation, more passion; in short she has all the good qualities of her nation united, the grace of manner, *l'art de vivre* and the charm of conversation. She is an extraordinary being. She combines the softness and sweetness of Germany with the ardour of the south, and the graceful manners peculiar to a French-woman.

She is open, sincere, passionate and jealous—all enthusiasm. She understands only by the soul. In the appreciation of painting she is wanting—Music is every-thing to her—she lives only in sound. When she is writing she loves to have music near her, and in fact what she writes is music only. The geometry of life has little value in her eyes; she is equally enthusiastic for chivalry and liberty—she belongs to the great world and is a frank Aristocrat—and all she knows she tells her friends. She is a personage of tragedy, perpetually requiring receptions, to give or receive crowns. She has been educated in the regions in which those political storms were gathered which decided the fate of the world. She requires to hear the sound of the carriages of Paris; she fades away in this exile."

Once fairly installed in his new post, Chamisso devoted himself assiduously to his duties; these were

not very onerous. His leisure-time was occupied in reading old romances, tales of chivalry and translating French, a task for which his mastery of both languages peculiarly fitted him. His own poetical talent still lay dormant, and he was pursued by that demon of melancholy which had always more or less tormented him. "To be happy", he wrote, "one must be an Emperor, a lover, or an idiot". Not finding himself in any of these conditions, and unable to discover the elements of felicity in that in which he was actually placed, he continued to lament his destiny—even while confessing that if the choice were offered him, he should be at a loss to determine what to select. "I do not know what would make me happy", he said one day to *Mad<sup>me</sup> de Staël*, "but I know perfectly well what is unnecessary to my enjoyment. Had I the power of God himself for twenty-four hours to be passed entirely in constructing my own happiness, I should not be more advanced than I am now."—"Ah!", replied *Mad<sup>me</sup> de Staël*, "if I could dispose of all hearts including my own, I should have no doubt of being happy."

Despite all the kind attentions of which he was the object, and the congenial society that surrounded him, Chamisso never felt at ease in France. He was constantly haunted by the desire of returning to Germany, and by a strange restlessness which would not suffer him to remain long in the same place. In 1812 he set off for Coppet to bid adieu to *Mad<sup>me</sup> de Staël*, for whom he ever entertained a most sincere regard and admiration.

He found her oppressed with sadness at the command she had just received from the Emperor of the French, to leave that sweet retreat for some more distant exile. "She is truly unhappy", he writes, "the curse falls on all she loves; all her friends are forced to leave her". In fact, the same persecution that followed this highly-gifted woman, a persecution so utterly unworthy its author, was not confined to her alone. Mad<sup>me</sup> Recamier and Mad<sup>me</sup> de Montmorenci were both banished for seeking to cheer her exile. Who can but deplore such littleness in so great a man?

Chamisso with generous devotion remained at Coppet till Mad<sup>me</sup> Staël's departure, to aid and solace her. He then took a pedestrian tour through Switzerland, and returned to Germany, where he applied himself to the study of anatomy with his usual ardour.

The events of 1813, the disastrous expedition to Russia, the invasion of the French soil deeply affected him; for though bound by every tie of habit, association and friendship to his adopted country, his native land had never wholly lost her claims upon his affections. Amid the blaze of her power and glory he might turn coldly from her; but his generous heart warmed towards her with all a patriot's love in the days of suffering and retribution. His ambiguous position was not one of his least trials. Germany had received, fostered and cared for him, when his own country had rejected and scorned him. He could never lift a sword against her, even to save the land that gave him birth; yet he shuddered at the thought of adding his arm to the victorious legions which,

flushed with victory and thirsting for revenge, were now marching upon Paris. To a mind ardent and susceptible as his, the necessity of remaining neutral in such a struggle was agony. To divert his thoughts, he turned to poetry and began the well-known tale of "Peter Schlemil" and if it be asked how, amid such a conflict of feelings, all painful, he could write anything so gay and humorous, be it remembered that "John Gilpin", the drollest of English ballads, was composed by Cowper, in a brief interval of the deepest depression.

"Peter Schlemil" is so well known, that we shall do no more than give a brief outline of the plan. Peter Schlemil, a poor miserable tailor, has a letter of recommendation to a rich personage residing in a splendid villa in the country, and sets off to present it. On arriving, he finds the master of the house in his park, surrounded by noble dames and cavaliers, and feels, as may be supposed, not a little out of place. At that moment a fair lady wounds her hands in gathering a rose—she deploras the want of a morsel of sticking-plaister, when a little man dressed in black suddenly starts forth, without uttering a word takes from his pocket a piece of the required article, and presents it with a profound bow to the lady. She accepts it without a word of thanks, and the party continue their promenade. They reach the summit of a hill which commands a superb view of the sea—a white spot is seen on the horizon, all cry for a telescope; but no telescope is at hand. The little man in black adyancing, draws forth the desired instrument. A moment afterwards some one observes

how pleasant it would be to have a carpet, to sit down on, and enjoy at leisure the splendid view. Scarcely are the words pronounced, when the little man exhibiting a splendid carpet forty-feet long, lays it down on the green-sward. Meanwhile the sun has become intolerably hot, and the lady, turning carelessly to the little man, inquires if he does not happen to have a tent about him; in a moment, a tent is extracted from the same marvellous pocket. Schlemil's astonishment increases every minute; but what is his amazement when, at the desire of one of the company, the man in black pulls out three horses ready saddled and bridled, and places them at the disposal of the guests. This is too much for Schlemil. Seized with terror he rushes from the spot. But ere many minutes have elapsed he hears footsteps behind him, and the mysterious personage who has performed so many wonders is at his side. "Forgive my boldness"; he cries, "you have a remarkably fine shadow, if you have any inclination to part with it, I will give you a fair price". Peter is not a little startled at so extraordinary a proposal; but the first surprise over, as he cannot remember that his shadow has ever been any peculiar use to him, and is tempted by the offer of a purse which shall never be exhausted, he concludes the bargain. No sooner are the words pronounced than the little man stoops down, sweeps the shadow from the ground, rolls it up, puts it in his pocket and disappears. Schlemil glowing with joy and triumph at the unexpected acquisition of boundless wealth, wends on his way. But soon he discovers that his shadow, like most other things,

has a value never dreamt of till it is lost. Unluckily for him the weather is bright and serene—and the absence of his usual attendant is thus rendered apparent. Wherever he goes, questions as to what has become of it assail him, mingled with dark hints and suspicions. In vain he showers his gold around, in vain he displays an almost regal pomp and splendour; the woman he loves and whom he has contrived for a while to keep in ignorance of his calamity by visiting her in the evening only, on accidentally observing his loss resolutely rejects the hand she had already accepted; his servants, terrified on perceiving the absence of that universal companion of man, unceremoniously quit his service. Poor Schlemil is in despair, and curses a hundred-times the officious demon who beguiled him. At length one day while he is, as usual, deeply regretting his fatal bargain, all at once the little black man appears before him, and offers to return the shadow for which he has no further use—but at a price somewhat exorbitant, namely the *soul* of the owner. Peter, who has profited by experience, resolutely refuses, and at length the demon, probably finding the purchase not worth the cost, agrees to annul the bargain on the purse being returned to him. Peter acquiesces, and joyously returns to his humble home and original avocations.

Such is the story of “Peter Schlemil”, which despite its apparent absurdity, gained universal nay almost instant popularity, and became a by-word for a poor silly unfortunate fellow in every part of the world. True, many people could not quite enter into



the despair of the hero, and were of opinion, as our readers will probably be, that the loss of so useless an appendage as a shadow was more than compensated by the acquisition of boundless wealth. It must not, however, be forgotten that this loss could be attributed only to unholy dealings with the Evil One, a suspicion which was sure to thrill the observers with horror, and serves to justify poor Peter's anguish. It has been suggested that, under this strange tale, Chamisso meant to inculcate a higher moral—that wealth, power and splendour bestow no real happiness, without some nearer, closer tie which like our *shadow* is always at our side; but as this second self is valuable only when it clings to us in gloom and obscurity, and not like our earthly shadow, when the sun shines on it alone—this suggestion does not appear of much value.

The popularity of "Peter Schlemil" was not confined to Germany. When some time afterwards, the author visited Copenhagen—St. Petersburg—and even the Cape of Good Hope, he had the pleasure of finding his hero there before him. In one year, the work had been thrice translated in England and once in the United States. In 1821 a French translation appeared and another in 1838.

Meanwhile Chamisso, to whom poetry was as yet but a pastime, devoted his attention to the study of botany and natural history, and to preparations for taking his degree. In 1815 he joined an expedition to the North Pole; but his letters during that journey do not possess any considerable interest. At Kamschatka, to his great astonishment, he found a

portrait of that beautiful Mad<sup>me</sup> Recamier whose devoted friendship for Mad<sup>me</sup> Staël had called down on her head the anger of the French Emperor. It was painted on glass, and a good likeness; but how it came there we are not informed. It was during these three years, a great part of which he was tossed on the stormy ocean, that his poetic powers awoke from the torpor in which they had so long been plunged. Some of his most charming verses were composed at this period, all tinged with the same gentle melancholy which had pervaded his life, and which the sad and lonely hours passed in pacing the deck with naught above or around, but sea and sky, were not calculated to diminish.

In 1818 he returned to Germany, and soon afterwards became acquainted with a young lady whose charms, mental and personal, won all those affections which, for want of some object, had hitherto slumbered within his breast. She became his wife.

Chamisso's long and ardent yearnings for domestic happiness were now gratified—his restless spirit was calmed and sobered by the influence of a peaceful and happy home; and his melancholy disappeared before the tenderness of his wife and the smiles of the infant with which ere long she presented him. In 1825 he was summoned to Paris, on an agreeable errand, to receive the sum of one hundred thousand francs, his share of the indemnity granted by Louis 18<sup>th</sup> to the Emigrants. It was with strangely mingled feelings, that he revisited the land of his birth. The regal line for which his family had bled and suffered were once more on

the throne of their ancestors, and Chamisso, as the sole surviving relative of him to whom the unfortunate Louis 16<sup>th</sup> had bequeathed so touching a memorial of affection and gratitude, was well received by the reigning monarch; but all he loved were in Germany. Paris, with its splendours and its pleasures, seemed to him a desert, and some traces of his former melancholy may be found in his letters of this period, mingled with the fondest yearnings for his home, his wife and his children. "Remember", he writes to the former, "to water my roses; do not forget to feed the sparrows and to care for my favourite plants—I shall come back to you unchanged; let me find every thing as I left it."

In 1827 Chamisso published an edition of his poems for the first time in a collected form. The general applause and popularity that attended them filled him with natural and excusable delight; for in his extreme modesty he had hitherto esteemed his own compositions far beneath their true value. From this collection we select a few of the most characteristic as specimens of his peculiar style, "The Three Sisters", a poem of considerable artistic beauty &c. The productions of Chamisso are less purely imaginative than those of Tieck and La Motte Fouqué. They are addressed to the heart rather than the fancy; the style is simpler; and while deeply thoughtful and full of true poetic feeling they have little of the dreaminess, the vague longings, the misty transcendentalism which form such peculiar features of the modern German school.

## THE THREE SISTERS.

We are three sisters worn with grief and tears,  
Grown grey with sorrows rather than with years,  
Well vers'd in love, dejected and deprest.  
Each deems that her's has been the hardest part;  
Approach; the poet knows the human heart,  
Be it thy task to set the strife at rest.

First learn my grief, how fearful and how deep,  
Starting, I woke from childhood's rosy sleep,  
The bud burst forth! a secret thrill came o'er me,  
The breath of love drew forth each hue so bright;  
A hero raised me to his own proud height,  
And life and all its charms lay spread before me.

Already with the bridal myrtle crown'd  
For him in whom my very being was bound,  
I watched, with mingled fear and rapture glowing;  
The marriage-torches cast their ruddy glare;  
They brought me in his corpse and laid it there,  
From seven deep wounds his crimson hearts-blood flowing.

The nameless horror of that awful night—  
That is the image stamped upon my sight,  
Waking or sleeping, I behold it still.  
I cannot live! to death I now belong,  
And yet I cannot die! oh! God how long  
Must all these tortures last that will not kill!

The second took the word with trembling tone:  
Oh not of shame! of blood the form alone  
That sleeping still or waking meets her view;  
My heart too open'd to that breath divine,  
Anguish and rapture—they have both been mine;  
For me the cup of love has mantled too.

The glory vanished from the loved one's head;  
I saw him selfish, mean, his brightness fled,  
And yet alas I lov'd him! him alone!  
He went; if shame still chain him to her side,  
Or raving madness drive him far and wide,  
I know not; but the grief is all my own.

She ceased; the third then sadly took the word:  
Thou pausest, now their sorrows thou hast heard,  
Doubtful how to decide betwixt the twain.  
Have they not liv'd and lov'd? our common doom,  
Though sorrow shroud them both in grief and gloom,  
And bid them to the dregs her chalice drain.

In one brief sentence all my sorrows dwell,  
Till thou hast heard it, pause! consider well,  
Ere yet the final judgment thou assign,  
And learn my better right, too clearly prov'd.  
Four words suffice me: I was never lov'd!  
The palm of grief thou wilt allow is mine.

The following is one of Chamisso's most celebrated poems.—We give a translation of the greater part omitting some verses of little merit:

#### ABDALLAH.

Beside a fountain in the waste Abdallah leant his head,  
Around him, all his worldly wealth, full eighty camels fed.  
Laden with costly merchandise, he sought Balsora's walls.  
Empty 'twas easy to return to Bagdad's princely halls.

To the same fountain soon there comes, the pilgrim's staff in hand,  
On foot a sacred dervish, who is wandering thro' the land.  
They greet each other courteously, sit down the meal to share  
They praise the fountain's waters, and thank Allah for his care.

They ask each other tidings of the journey they pursue,  
Full gladly each communicates the end he has in view;  
Each to the other tells the tale of all that he hath seen.  
At length, the dervish speaks a word of import deep and keen.

Within this very district, tho' hid from human eye,  
And I could lead thee to the spot,—unnumber'd treasures lie.  
One might load a thousand camels, a thousand! aye and more  
With gems and precious metals; none would miss it from the store.

Abdallah listens wonderingly amazed beyond control;  
The blood runs cold in every vein, and avarice fills his soul.  
Lead me, my brother, lead me, to that glorious spot of earth.  
Thou'lt make me rich and happy, wealth to thee can have no worth.

There let me freight my camels with precious gems and gold;  
Their weight will never e'en be missed, from treasures so untold;  
And unto thee I promise, so thou wilt show the road,  
The strongest and the finest with all its costly load.

I meant not so, my brother, the dervish calm replies.  
Forty for thee, forty for me, that seems both just and wise—  
Thy gain, the camel's value, will a million-times repay,  
And bethink thee well, my brother, if I point not out the way?

Well! hasten then, my brother, and to reward thy toil.  
We will divide the camels, we will divide the spoil,  
He spoke—but secretly enraged, with so much wealth to part  
Envy, to avarice allied, gnaws deep within his heart.

. . . . .  
Horrid and steep the rocky wall shuts in that darksome glade.  
For never yet had human foot disturb'd its awful shade.  
They halt; Abdallah lingers, with the camels in the rear,  
Who in two bands divided, to wait their load stand near.

Meanwhile the dervish hastens dried grass and weeds to pile,  
 He sets the withered heap on fire, and mutters prayers the while;  
 Then when the flame burns brightly, with many a strange device  
 He flings upon the blazing mass handfuls of costly spice.

Smoke that obscures the face of day in curling waves ascends,  
 While from the clouds the thunder bursts, the very earth it rends,  
 The murky darkness is dispersed, the light dawns forth once more,  
 And in the rocky wall they view a widely open door.

It leads to halls of splendour such as eye hath never seen  
 With piles and piles of ruddy gold and radiant gems between  
 Columns of glittering steel support a roof of crystal bright,  
 And carbuncles of wondrous hue shed round their mystic light.

The intruders bear away gold and jewels as much  
 as the camels can carry, and as they are about to  
 depart the dervish stoops to lift up a little wooden  
 box, containing a simple unguent, which he conceals  
 beneath his robe:

Silent they leave the cavern—the dervish strides before,  
 Fulfils the same mysterious rites—with thunder-sound the door  
 Closes behind the pilgrims;—for starting they prepare,  
 Each takes his forty camels—such was the promis'd share.

They hasten onward to the fount where the two roads divide,  
 When each shall take his destined way, they reach it side by side;  
 And there they part, exchanging the kiss of love and peace;  
 Abdallah pours forth thanks which seem as tho' they ne'er  
 would cease.

But as he paces onward, strange thoughts his bosom cross;  
 His comrade's gain appears to him his own peculiar loss;  
 Such treasures for a dervish—his camels too, his own!  
 What needs he worldly wealth whose thoughts should be on  
 God alone?

He followed on his traces—my brother, hear me speak,  
'Tis not my own advantage—'tis only thine I seek,  
Thou know'st not what a burden—thou dream'st not what a care,  
Good man, with forty camels—thou soon wilt have to bear.

Thou art strange unto their tricks and wiles, I speak the  
simple truth.

Oh! trust to me who've followed the trade from early youth.  
If I can manage eighty, forty were too much for thee,  
With thirty thou may'st yet arrive; but more—it cannot be."

"Brother", replies the dervish, with smooth unruffled brow,  
Deep in my secret soul a voice whisper'd what thou say'st now,  
Take the ten camels—satisfy the longings of thy heart.  
I would not ill-contented from thy brother thou should'st part.

Abdallah thanks and leaves him—but avarice whispers nay  
If thou had'st ask'd for twenty—the fool had answered yea.  
He turns to seek the dervish, the effort he must broach.  
The pilgrim stops and calmly awaits his swift approach.

Hear me, oh hear me, brother, if thou would'st live and thrive.  
With thirty camels never at Balsora thou'lt arrive.  
They're obstinate and vicious, I tell thee once again,  
Believe me, 'twould be better far, wert thou to give me ten.

The dervish consents.

The boon so lightly granted—almost before he spoke,  
The vulture avarice in his breast with all its strength awoke.  
Untouched, unblushing, unabashed—he asks again—again—  
Ten of the twenty camels, then nine of what remain.

And now the dervish has but one, the treasure is not vast:  
Yet avarice urges him to ask—for this—the very last.  
He flings himself upon the ground, he clasps the pilgrim's knee.  
This boon thou'lt surely not refuse, who granted all to me.



Then take the last, my brother, I will not answer no—  
I would not have thee part from me, in anger or in woe.  
Be humble in thy new estate, and unto Allah pray,  
Who knows when meet to give us wealth and when to take  
away.

Abdallah thanks him and departs; when he suddenly  
remembers the casket and returning implores the  
Dervish to give it him. The holy man yields once more:

A thrill of joyful terror runs through each trembling vein  
As in his hand he holds it—half pleasure and half pain.  
He scarcely stops to speak his thanks, but cries “now thou  
must tell  
What strange mysterious virtues within this ointment dwell.”

The dervish: “Great is Allah! wondrous the ointment’s power.  
Stroke thy left eye-lid with the salve, and from that very hour  
Thou’lt see the secret treasures, deep in the earth enshrined;  
But if thou touch the right-eye, thou’lt be for ever blind.”

Abdallah listens wonderingly, and feels his bosom swell  
To try the wondrous virtues that in the ointment dwell.  
“Then touch my eye, my brother—let me not pray in vain,  
That I may see the treasure, hid from all human ken.”

The dervish yields compliance—and now can he behold  
The keen and glittering iron—the bright and massive gold—  
Sapphires and sparkling diamonds, and rubies bright and gay;  
Deep in the bosom of the earth they shine with tempting ray.

He gazes on the radiant store amazed and over-power’d;  
The blood runs cold in every vein, with avarice he’s devour’d.  
He thinks, if on the other eye the wondrous salve were pour’d  
Of all those countless treasures I, perchance, might now be lord.

And he implores the Dervish to stroke the right eye:

"My brother", said the Dervish, "these lips speak truth alone:  
The virtues of this wondrous salve to thee I have made known:  
I've loaded thee with benefits, nor would I now become  
The hand of wrath which plunges thee into a fearful doom.

The warning stings him into rage, and 'gainst all wisdom steels:  
The envy that his soul devours, he thinks the Dervish feels.  
His calm and mild refusal, is a spur to his desire,  
And mingled with his avarice now are hate and burning ire.

He speaks with scornful laughter; I read thy secret mind.  
That which gives sight to one eye — makes not the other blind.  
Stroke my right eye-lid as the left — thy menace I defy;  
And know if thou refuse consent, I'll force thee to comply,

And furious as he lifts his hand, the menace to fulfil,  
The Dervish is at length constrain'd to obey the madman's will.  
He takes the wondrous ointment — anoints the eye — the right.  
And on the wretch that darkness breaks which ne'er shall know  
the light.

"Oh! Dervish, thou hast spoke the truth, a fearful truth I own.  
Now wonder-worker haste! make good the evil thou hast done.  
I have done thee no evil — thou hast what thou hast sought.  
Thou art in Allah's hand who pays all debts of deed and  
thought.

In vain all prostrate in the dust, he shrieks in wild despair;  
Silent the Dervish turns away — nor heeds his frantic prayer —  
Collects the eighty camels — to Balsora wends his way,  
While in the waste Abdallah lies, to nameless pangs a prey.

That sun he never more shall see, fulfils his daily round;  
Another and another morn, it gilds the sandy ground —  
There he lay, till a merchant chanced to pass that desert track.  
Who to Bagdad for charity brought the blind beggar back

Poetry, however, did not so absorb the attention of Chamisso as to render him insensible to the cause of liberty to which, though an emigrant's son, he had always been warmly attached, and he beheld with pain the retrograde tendencies of the Bourbon government. He watched the course of events with anxiety and foreboding, and the revolution of 1830 filled his heart with hope and joy.

On the morning of August 3<sup>rd</sup>", says his biographer Hitzig, "he rushed into my room, holding in his hand the journal containing the wondrous intelligence." He had already been half through the city in slippers and dressing-gown, without a hat, stopping every body he met, young and old, men and women, reading the news, shaking hands with them, and congratulating them as if they were as enthusiastic as himself." (1) Burning with love and sympathy for all mankind, his generous heart fully believed that the happy moment of constitutional liberty had at length dawned for the world at large, and deep indeed was his disappointment, when he discovered how small a portion, in Germany at least, were able either to comprehend the nature of true liberty or inclined to make any sacrifice in its cause. He had fondly imagined that the King of Prussia, whose many virtues both private and public had won his sincere esteem and regard, would give his kingdom those constitutional rights it had so long desired. But he did not fully weigh the difficulties by which the monarch was surrounded. Chamisso's hopes were destined

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(1) *Leben und Briefe von Chamisso, von Hitzig.*

to be blighted, and the disappointment preyed deeply on his health and spirits.

In 1835, he was named member of the Academy of Sciences at Berlin, and at the same time received a letter from Frederick William himself, thanking him for his works which he had lately presented to him; a letter written in a tone of such true kindness as to touch the poet to the heart, and deepen his regret that, in his eyes at least, the monarch was less admirable than the man.

A heavy calamity had some time previously befallen him; his wife to whom he was so fondly attached, whose love had shed a balm on his almost withered heart, died on the 21<sup>st</sup> of May.

His grief was deep and concentrated; outwardly he was calm and resigned. "It is over", he writes to a friend soon after; "I can now tranquilly await my time, bear my cross in patience, and pray 'Lord, thy will be done'. I have enjoyed much happiness, more than most, and I acknowledge it with thankfulness." The hour so hoped for was not long delayed. Fifteen months after the death of that beloved wife, Chamisso followed her to the tomb.

A short time before his end, he wrote for a poor old washerwoman two little poems, which had immense success, and the proceeds of which, given to her children, insured their future existence. The mingled pathos and simplicity of those verses lend them in the original a touching beauty, and the homeliness of the subject far from diminishing, increased the interest attached to them. Like our own Wordsworth (to whose genius, however, his will bear no

comparison), Chamisso loved to select his themes of song from humble life — to hold up to the admiration of a world, engrossed in its own enjoyments or its own sufferings, the trials, the virtues, the privations of the poor — and it must be allowed that his simplicity never degenerates into silliness nor his sympathy into sentimental affectation.

#### THE OLD WASHERWOMAN.

Seest thou busied with the linen  
With brow though wrinkled calm and clear,  
The most alert of washerwomen,  
Now in her six-and-seventieth year!  
Thus hath she gain'd her daily bread,  
With sweat of brow and honest pains,  
Contented faithfully to tread  
The humble path her God ordains.

In her young days, oh, ne'er forgot!  
She loved, and hoped and wedded too,  
And her's has been a woman's lot  
Of cares, believe me, not a few;  
Three children to her spouse she gave,  
She tended him when worn and ill,  
She laid him in the silent grave,  
With hope and faith unshaken still.

And now the children must be fed —  
Her courage did not fail her here;  
In honest virtue they were bred,  
Order and truth their only gear.  
With prayers she sent them on their way  
A hard-earned livelihood to win,  
And she was left alone and grey —  
But calm and firm the soul within!

A saving careful life she led,  
 Combing at night the flax she bought  
 This flax she spun to finest thread,  
 The thread she to the weaver brought.  
 'Twas changed to linen white as snow,  
 Needle and scissors served her then  
 With her own aged hands to sew  
 Her shroud without a single stain! <sup>(1)</sup>

And oh! in this my evening hour,  
 Would I could feel within my heart  
 That to my utmost strength and power  
 I had like her performed my part!  
 Had known like her in life's young days  
 Wisely to taste its chalice sweet,  
 And at its close, like her could gaze  
 With joy upon my winding-sheet.

#### CONCLUSION.

To listen to my tale it pleas'd you well  
 Of all which my old washerwoman befel;  
 Ye held it for a fable, not for truth.  
 To me at times it seems a fable too;  
 For death has long remov'd from mortal view  
 All those who knew her in the days of youth.

The rising generation knows her not;  
 It passes on unmindful of her lot.  
 Careless its aid or pity to bestow,  
 She stands alone. — To labour long inured,  
 She never spared herself while strength endured,  
 But poor, forgotten, woe unto her now!

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<sup>(1)</sup> To comprehend this allusion, it must be observed that it was formerly and in some parts of Germany still is the custom among women of the lower orders, to spin their own shroud, a kind of chemise, which they wear on particular occasions, and then lay aside to serve for the most solemn and the last.

The weight of years has borne her down at length.  
 Her mind still active! but how worn her strength,  
 With her own lips she own'd it cannot last,  
 "Be it according to God's high behest"  
 "If soon he does not take me to his rest"  
 "He must provide for me; my day is past."

My friends! may Heaven reward you all one day,  
 Give you a life as long as her's I pray,  
 A death as calm as her's is sure to be.  
 Ah! far beyond all other gifts of earth,  
 Are those we rarely prize at their true worth,  
 A green old age, a conscience pure and free. <sup>(1)</sup>

Frederick Matthisson belongs rather to the descriptive than to the romantic school. Long one of the most popular poets in Germany, he has shared the fate of so many who, overpraised by their contemporaries, are too little remembered by posterity. Still, the melody of his versification, the truth and beauty of many of his descriptions of natural scenery, render him a constant favourite among the young.

Matthisson was the son of a military chaplain and was born at Magdeburg in 1761. Like Voss, Hölderlin and so many others, he had no resources save his own exertions, and like them on quitting the University, he undertook the duties of a tutor in a private family. But Matthisson had spent a considerable period of time beneath the hospitable roof of Professor Bonstetten <sup>(2)</sup> at Lausanne, and on

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<sup>(1)</sup> Chamisso's Gedichte. Septe Ausgabe. Leipzig 1857.

<sup>(2)</sup> Bonstetten was a celebrated Swiss Professor known by his *Philosophie der Erfahrung* &c.

entering the family of a wealthy French merchant, on finding himself transported from the blue waters of the lake of Lausanne and the snowy peaks of the Alps to the crowded streets and dirty thorough-fares of Lyons, he felt that no pecuniary advantages could atone for the loss of those beauties of nature which had become essential to his very existence. Oppressed with the "mal du pays" he threw up his situation and returned to Germany where he remained for four years, leading a desultory though not an idle life, supporting himself by occasional contributions to journals and periodicals. These attracted considerable attention, and in 1794 he was offered the post of reader to the princess of Anhalt-Dessau, with whom he visited Italy and many parts of Switzerland where he composed the greater part of his poems. In 1812 the King of Würtemberg invited him to his court and loaded him with favours, appointing him in rapid succession, privy-councillor, councillor of Legation, private librarian and knight of the order of the civil service. Rarely, save in the case of Goethe, and perhaps of our own Montague and Addison, have poetic merits been rewarded with so brilliant a social position, or with so many honours from royal hands. Matthisson died in his seventy-first year March 8<sup>th</sup> 1813.<sup>(1)</sup> Matthisson's merits as a poet have been the subject of much discussion among his critics; some lavishing on his works the most indiscriminate admiration, others accusing him of dealing too much in

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(1) *Leben von Matthisson. Bonstetten's Briefe an Matthisson 1795—1827. Zürich.*



natural descriptions only, and complaining that all his pictures are mere pieces of still-life. If the sole mission of poetry be to depict man, human passions and human actions, then the verses of Matthisson which, with few exceptions, consist entirely in the delineation of nature, are indeed wanting in the most essential requisites of the art. The beauties of creation however, are no less within the poet's domain than the painter's, and are an equally legitimate subject of his verse as the struggles and vicissitudes of daily life or the workings of the human heart. In many of the landscapes of Claude Lorraine, of Poussin and Salvator-Rosa there is not a single human form. Some of the most exquisite poetry in our own language consists in pure unmingled delineations of nature; yet who is ever weary of gazing on the one or listening to the other? That Matthisson is at times both cold and monotonous cannot be denied; but this arises not because he deals too much in descriptions of natural scenery, but because those descriptions are sometimes wanting in power and in variety, and are marred by a straining after sentiment and a certain morbid sadness. In his happier efforts, however, all who are acquainted with his poems will agree with Schiller that "they charm us by their truth and simplicity, and attract us by the harmonious beauty which breathes in every line."

## EVENING.

Hesper's pallid light is dying,  
Now the orb of day declines,  
And the evening-breeze is sighing  
Through the dark and whispering pines.

From yon convent calm and holy  
Vesper-bells salute the ear.  
O'er the morass—darkly—slowly  
Phantom-shapes are drawing near.

'Mid the shadows gathering o'er me,  
The Redeemer's image gleams,  
And his glory shines before me,  
Like the morning's radiant beams.

Though the storm its fury waken,  
What can move the good and brave?  
At the helm he stands unshaken,  
Till he sink beneath the wave.

When did ever vain complaining,  
Change our fate whate'er it be?  
Calmly every woe sustaining  
Let us bow to Heaven's decree. <sup>(1)</sup>

Louis Theobald Kosegarten and John Gaudenz Salis may be regarded as belonging to the immediate school of Matthiſſon. The latter, his most intimate friend, was born at the castle of Bothmar near Muhlin. Like most Swiss noblemen of his age he entered the French service and rose to the rank of captain of the Swiss-guards at Versailles. In 1787 he retired from the army and finished his days in happy privacy; he died 1843.

It was in the soft and gentle that Salis excelled; his verses display much taste and delicacy with here and there a few happy touches of originality, and

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(1) Matthiſſon's *Gedichte*. 1839.

tenderness. Less highly finished than those of Matthiesson, they move the heart more by their true pathos and unpretending simplicity. We present the following specimens.

#### THE GRAVE.

The Tomb is deep and silent,  
Who can its depths explore?  
It covers with its gloomy veil  
A strange and unknown shore —

In that mysterious land,  
Is heard no song of love,  
Flowers strewn by friendship's hand  
Reach but the moss above.

In vain the bride is moaning,  
In anguish and despair;  
The orphan's bitter groaning,  
Can find no echo there.

Yet there resides oh! mortal,  
That peace thou seek'st in vain,  
Tis thro' that gloomy portal  
That thou thy home must gain.

The heart all sad and lonely,  
By tempests tost and sore,  
Finds rest and quiet only,  
When it can beat no more!

#### HOME OF CHILDHOOD.

Home of childhood, love and gladness,  
Oft do thoughts of thee arise;  
Mingled longing, joy and sadness,  
With fond tears bedew mine eyes.

Quiet hamlet softly bounded  
By cool glen and sparkling rill,  
Home with clustering flowers surrounded,  
Oh! I think upon ye still.

On the vine my father tended,  
On the grapes with purple glow,  
On the tree whose boughs descended  
O'er the humble roof below.

Still the village-bells seem ringing  
Their glad music as of yore,  
And I hear the black-bird singing,  
And I feel a child once more.

Often in my dreams I'm sailing,  
On that much-lov'd mimic sea,  
Still those verdant meadows hailing,  
Shaking apples from the tree,

To the brooks my lips applying  
In full many a summers' heat,  
'Neath the forest-shadows lying  
Gathering berries ripe and sweet.

When with heart, now sorrow-laden,  
Shall I hail the linden-trees  
Where so many a youth and maiden  
Sported in the evening breeze?

Or the church—its spire and gable  
Half-conceal'd 'mid bower and wood,  
Where the stork, so famed in fable,  
Gives its little ones their food?

Home of childhood sweet and holy,  
Which I never more may see,  
In thy church-yard calm and lowly,  
Keep one little spot for me!

The life of Louis Theobald Kosegarten, like that of Matthiesson, offers but little interest to the reader. He saw the light at the little town of Krebs-muhnen in Mecklenburg. Like Matthiesson he entered the family of a nobleman as tutor, where he remained several years, and on leaving it took holy orders and was named curate at Waldgast, in Pomerania. Thence he was preferred to the rectory of Altenkirchen in the island of Rugen, and in this spot, so rich in natural beauties, so blessed in the almost patriarchial innocence and simplicity of its inhabitants, he passed the greater part of his life. Higher and more lucrative posts were frequently offered him; but he invariably refused them, declaring that nothing could compensate for the grief he should feel in leaving his beloved island. At length, however, he was induced to accept the appointment of councillor of the consistory at Greifswalder, where he rose to the rank of Rector of the University which he occupied till his death. His works consist of a tolerably long poem called *The "Island voyage,"* "*Jocunda*" and a variety of occasional verses. The "*Jocunda*" is a poor imitation of Voss's "*Louisa*;" but his smaller poems are not deficient in grace and melody, and occasionally present happy images and turns of thought. His works have passed through five editions; a proof, if not of their merit, at least of the favour they enjoy; but as in tone and style they greatly resemble the preceeding we shall not offer any specimen.

Körner and Arndt belong to the school of Tieck and La Motte Fouqué; but they are best remembered by those patriotic songs which once thrilled every

German heart. Seldom indeed, in romance or history, do we behold a form at once more heroic or more touching than that of Theodore Körner. Standing on the very threshold of existence, with all its brightest, richest gifts showered on his path, his young brow already crowned with poetic laurels, the adored of his heart awaiting him at the altar, he sacrificed all, love, fame, ease, life at the shrine of patriotism and duty. "Germany is about to rise," he wrote to his father; "the Prussian Eagle wakes in every faithful breast and by the beating of her mighty wing rouses once more the hope of German freedom. Let me prove myself her worthy son. Now that I know what bliss can ripen for me in this world, now that the star of happiness sheds its brightest light upon my path, now, by Heavens! it is an heroic feeling that impels my soul; for it is the mighty conviction that no sacrifice can be too great for that highest of earthly blessings, our country's freedom. Perhaps your paternal heart may whisper; Theodore is created for more important ends. He might have effected more in other fields of action—he has yet a great debt to pay to humanity. But, my father, to perish in the cause of national freedom and honour, none are too good, but many too unworthy! If Heaven have really gifted me with a more than ordinary mind—a mind that, under your careful guidance, has learned to think and feel, where is the moment in which I can better prove that it is really mine? A great age requires great acts. What! shall I be contented to sing my comrades' triumphs? I know that you will suffer much for my sake, my mother too

will weep. Heaven comfort her! I cannot spare her this trial. That I offer up my life, that is of little import; but that I offer it up now that it is crowned with all the flowery wreaths of love, and joy, and friendship, this is indeed a sacrifice of which only *one* prize is worthy—our country's freedom!" (1) This sacrifice he made. He died fighting for that Country he loved so well. "Brief brave and glorious was his career", and the tears of friend and foe mingled on his grave.

Short as was his existence, Körner had already struck, with more or less success, almost every chord of the poetic lyre. His dramas are deficient in constructiveness and probability, the personages have not enough flesh and blood, the language is too ideal and high-flown; yet they abound in scenes glowing with power and passion, and prove all he would probably have achieved had life been spared him. How few dramatic writers of any land have attained an equal degree of excellence at the age of twenty-one! His lyric poems, though often tainted with the vague and dreamy fantastic spirit peculiar to his school, are replete with true poetic beauty and tenderness. The following seem to us peculiarly graceful.

#### IN THE NIGHT.

Yes thou art near—A thin partition only  
 Parts me from thee;  
 Thou dreamest in that slumber calm and holy —  
 Perchance of me!

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(1) *Leben und Briefe von Körner.*

(2) *Selections from Körner's Works. Williams and Norgate.*

A thousand flowers of purest love are wreathing  
Their blossoms near,—  
As though the spirit of thy dreams were breathing  
His whispers in my ear.

O'er my young brow a fairy breath is stealing  
With motions sweet,  
A strange foreboding wakes! delicious feeling!  
My pulses cease to beat.

It was thy spirit love! how fair tho' fleeting!  
I knew thy kiss;  
The sweet melodious warbling of thy greeting  
Reveal'd my bliss.

It was thy spirit! Love's own breath was o'er me.  
Oh! moments bright!  
Would that thy curtain still veil'd all before me,  
Oh! sweet and tranquil night!

#### WHEN SHE TOOK LEAVE OF THE SPRING.

Farewell, sweet Naiad of the stream and grot,  
With hopes of renovated wealth I came;  
Nor has thy promise failed. With strengthen'd frame  
I thence depart and bless the sacred spot.

The fair one spoke, and o'er the waters bending,  
Swift from her lovely hand, with joyous haste  
The goblet in the sparkling wave she cast,  
And watched it in the silvery foam descending.

Then laugh'd and gaily turn'd her to depart—  
No more on me that beauteous face will beam  
Whose glance brought spring and sunshine to my heart

Oh! could I but recal those hours so bright!  
The ideal bliss has vanished from my sight  
E'en as the goblet in the sparkling stream.



But it is his patriotic verses, his "Lyre and Sword", which have invested the name of Körner with the halo of fame and have rendered his memory sacred to his countrymen. We present a version of the "Black Huntsman" and the "Prussian Eagle" which appear to us the most striking.

#### THE PRUSSIAN EAGLE.

Welcome! I hear thy wings high waving o'er me;  
My heart fortels new victory in thy breath;  
On, noble bird! The clouds disperse before thee.  
Rise! Our avenger o'er the field of death.

The gallant steed obeys the tyrant's rein,  
The diamond has lost its radiant glow —  
The Lion cowers beneath a stranger's blow;  
Thou only rear'st thy flight towards Heaven again.

Soon 'mid thy sons, my place shall I resume,  
Soon shall I hail thee in the battle-fray,  
To victory and to freedom lead the way,  
And then what reck's the minstrel of his doom?  
It shall be welcome, whatso'er it be  
If but a grave, so that that grave be free!

#### SONG OF THE BLACK HUNTSMAN.

On to the field! Spirits of vengeance move us,  
On, Germans bold and free!  
On to the field—our standard waves above us  
On—death or victory!

Small is our band; but strong is our reliance  
Upon a righteous Lord.  
To every art of Hell we bid defiance;  
He is our shield and sword.

No quarter, friends! High wield your weapons! cheerly!  
Death be the invaders doom.  
And every drop of blood! oh! sell it dearly,  
There's freedom in the tomb.

Still do we wear the funeral garb of sorrow  
For our departed fame,  
And do ye ask what means the hue we borrow—  
Vengeance! that is its name.

God to our side—Our righteous cause victorious,  
The star of peace shall shine,  
And we will plant the standard proud and glorious  
Beside our own free Rhine! <sup>(1)</sup>

The name of Arndt is likewise associated, in every German mind, with the cause of national liberty. His "Where is the German Fatherland?" resounded from one end of the empire to the other at the memorable epoch, when, roused at length from its despairing apathy, Germany rose as one man to throw off the yoke of France. Twenty-five years later it again echoed from lip to lip. This time the enemy was no foreign invader; this time the battle-cry was: "Constitutional Rights and Guarantees", those rights so solemnly promised in the hour of peril, so fruitlessly demanded when the peril was over. But Arndt was now to discover how vain were all his glowing dreams! to find—too late, that the Germans, divided into a hundred different States, each with its own local interests and local passions, had no "Fatherland". Arndt's patriotic songs

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(1) Körner's Werke. Selections from Körner's Works.

have been so frequently translated that we will attempt no version. We prefer presenting one of his softer strains less generally known, and which is remarkable for its pure and healthy spirit.

## CONVERSATION.

I ask'd the dewy morning—Wherefore shin'st thou  
With rosy light?

I asked the lovely virgin—wherefore twin'st thou  
Flowers in thy locks so bright?

Thy golden tints, sweet morn, must fade away;  
Thy charms, oh lovely virgin, must decay;  
Why thus vain garlands weave?

With heaven's own hues, the roseate morn replied,  
I deck my brow!

What evil destiny may yet betide

I neither ask nor know;

He who bade moon and stars and planets shine—  
He tinged with hues of light these cheeks of mine;  
Then wherefore shall I grieve?

I crown me while my spring is in its bloom,  
Replied the beauteous maid;

Why should I shroud me in eternal gloom

Because my youth must fade?

To him who guards each little warbler's nest

Who bids the flowers bloom bright on Nature's breast —

To him my lot I leave.

Arndt is yet living—in the possession of all his vigour of mind and body despite his advanced age. <sup>(1)</sup>

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(1) Lebenserinnerungen aus meinem Leben. Leipzig 1842.

## CHAPTER XI.

### DRAMA. SUCCESSORS OF LESSING. KOTZEBUE. IFFLAND. MÜLLNER. WERNER.

STATE OF THE DRAMA AT THE CLOSE OF THE 18th AND BEGINNING OF THE 19th CENTURY.—SUCCESSORS OF LESSING.—THEIR INFLUENCE.—GOETHE, SCHILLER.—THEIR INFLUENCE.—KOTZEBUE.—UNFAIR CHARGES AGAINST HIM.—HIS TRAGIC FATE.—GUILT AND FOLLY OF POLITICAL ASSASSINATION.—IFFLAND'S DRAMAS.—ROMANTIC SCHOOL.—MÜLLNER.—HIS YOUTH.—HIS LOVE.—MARRIAGE.—DOMESTIC UNHAPPINESS.—HIS WORKS.—"DIE SCHULD".—ITS SUCCESS.—ILLNESS.—DEATH.—WERNER.—HIS VIOLENT AND ERRING YOUTH.—HIS FATAL TENDENCIES.—REDEEMING VIRTUES.—DEVOTED FILIAL AFFECTION.—DISSIPATED LIFE.—FIRST, SECOND AND THIRD MARRIAGE.—DIVORCE.—TAKES ORDERS.—HIS SERMONS.—ILLNESS.—CONVERSION TO THE CHURCH OF ROME.—DEATH.—DRAMAS.—THE "SOHN DES THALS", "LUTHER", "ATTILA".—29th OF FEBRUARY.

THE influence of the romantic school was not confined to lyrical poetry. To understand its full workings on public taste we must return for a brief space to the drama, which we left towards the middle of the 18th century under the fostering care of its regenerator and champion Lessing. We have seen with what success his efforts to destroy French literary

domination had been crowned. The Gallic star grew paler and paler, till, at length, it disappeared from the German horizon. The unities perished beneath Lessing's thundering tread. As usual, the re-action was carried to the extreme. Greeks, Romans, kings and princesses, were replaced by very honest but very tiresome burghers with their common-place wives and daughters; and the toga and the tunic gave way to woollen petticoats and tail-coats. Every thing like poetry, either in language or sentiment, was banished from the stage. "We had nothing", says Vilmar, "but foresters and secretaries, councillors and justices, with their good housewives who fell into fits of despair if the servant-girl threw the tart into the dirt, or the footman did not lay the pears on the plate in exactly the manner she desired." (1) When to this we add a certain lachrymose sentimentality which suited the thoroughly prosaic tendency of such pieces, about as well as a wreath of flowering myrtle the brow of a scullion, we may imagine the strange and ludicrous effect they must have produced. Such was the state of affairs when Goethe appeared. His rapid glance at once discerned the poverty of dramatic art, his flexible and many-sided genius set about to supply the deficiency. He pursued no beaten road, no regular path. Now he luxuriated in descriptions of the 16th century, of its iron-warriors, its feudal castles, its secret tribunals — now he turned to another age, and to his canvass started a graphic picture of the good Burghers of the Netherlands, of their stern oppressor, of their

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(1) Vilmar, *Geschichte der deutschen Literatur*, p. 559.

valiant champion. Now he sought, to drape his *dramatis personæ* in the severe and solemn grandeur of ancient Greece; now he invested them with the poetic graces of Italy in the Middle Ages. Anon he turned from these lofty themes to the every-day joys and sorrows of common life; then plunging at once into the deepest mysteries of thought, into the profoundest secrets of the human heart, he rose to the height of poetic power and beauty in his "Faust". But in these, as in all his other works, Goethe had no end or aim, save to carry to perfection that art in which he was so great a master. Vice and virtue, truth and falsehood go calmly on their respective ways, each portrayed with the same graceful complacency, with the same exquisite skill. The immense and far-spreading influence of Goethe rendered this singular indifference, which confounds the very sense of right and wrong, doubly lamentable. No one can desire that a poem or a romance should be transformed into a homily, or that a moral purpose should pierce at every line. But a nature, truly noble and lofty, will unconsciously diffuse its own bright and purifying influence over all its works, even as flowers distil their perfume on the breeze. <sup>(1)</sup>

Thus was it with Schiller. In plastic skill and variety his dramatic creations are infinitely inferior to those of Goethe. They may be justly accused of bearing too great a resemblance to each other. But they are

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(1) For admirable remarks on the tendency of Goethe's Life and Writings, see Edinburgh Review July 1857. Art: "Life and works of Goethe".

all drawn from his own generous and noble soul; they all glow with the love of true goodness and greatness, with enthusiasm for virtue and liberty, and this enthusiasm, even when overstrained, communicated itself as by an electric spark to all his auditors, and kindled in their breasts a fire akin to his own.

But both Goethe and Schiller, as dramatists, were for a time utterly eclipsed by one who compared to either was as a dwarf to a giant—Kotzebue. For fifty years the tide of popularity bore him triumphantly afloat; then it turned and, as usual, no abuse was too gross to be poured on the unlucky poet who had committed the abominable crime of deceiving the innocent public and palming on them a counterfeit for real solid gold. It may be reasonably questioned, however, whether a favour which continued unabated for upwards of half a century despite the violent attacks to which it had been continually subjected, could have been altogether without a solid basis. That Kotzebue's merits were most ridiculously exaggerated in his own time is undoubtedly true; but that is no reason why we should deny him those to which he has a fair and legitimate claim. There is no people so prone "to make idols and to find them clay" as the Germans. "We are always setting up and pulling down", says a contemporary publication. "The God of yesterday is dashed headlong from his throne to make room for some new object of adoration, and not content with changing our divinities we sacrifice the fallen at the shrine of his successor"<sup>(1)</sup>. To no one do

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(1) *Deutsches Museum*. Nov. 1857.

these words apply more truly than to Kotzebue. In high moral aim, in poetic beauty, in historic truth he is indeed absolutely deficient. His Spaniards and his Peruvians, his Bohemian rebels and his plain German burghers speak pretty much the same language. Many of his pieces are frivolous and tedious; but on the other hand, there are frequently scenes of great dramatic power and beauty. Such is that in the "Hussites" where the inhabitants of the besieged city, despairing of rescue, send their children to implore the mercy of the fierce assailants. Among the little suppliants are the sons of the Burgomeister. The unhappy father, overcome by parental anguish, has followed them afar. The stern Procop, leader of the fanatics, espies him and commands him on pain of death to point out his children. He refuses. The soldiers seize him, and are about to strike him dead, when his sons, rushing forward, fling themselves into his arms.

The charge of immorality so frequently brought against Kotzebue is not entirely without foundation, still it applies to a certain number of his works only, and even then by no means in the full and unlimited force of the term. In "Misanthropy and Repentance" for instance, he has been severely blamed for lending an irresistible attraction to a woman who is guilty of one of the greatest of sins, that of breaking her marriage-vow. But let it be remembered that it is her repentance not her guilt which he invests with this touching charm. Here, at least, Kotzebue does not, like too many more celebrated authors, defend the cause of sin; he does not seek to



veil it in grace and beauty so seducing that we can scarcely refrain from sympathising with what we ought to abhor; he pleads only for mercy to the penitent. The erring wife is torn with deep unceasing remorse, a remorse so terrible that not even the generous pardon of her husband can restore her to that peace of mind, she has forfeited for ever. What is there in this dangerous to morality? Is it not the very doctrine we are at the present moment seeking so earnestly to inculcate? It is really amusing to hear critics who can discover nothing whatever immoral in the "Mitschuldigen" where the hero, after coldly and quietly committing the most shameless infidelity towards a tender wife, and seducing a too-confiding girl, settles the matter with his conscience by living with both of them, burst into exclamations of virtuous indignation at a drama, the aim of which is really to exemplify the great Christian doctrine: "*That likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons which need no repentance.*"<sup>(1)</sup>

But while the love of fair dealing induces us to clear the name of Kotzebue from the opprobrium unjustly cast on it—a task which, we are aware some of our readers will think, we might have spared ourselves, we would by no means defend the general tone of his compositions in which a morbid sensibility, a straining after effect, too frequently supply the place of pure healthy morality. Still his Comedies are quite as virtuous and far more amusing than most

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(1) Translated, like all Kotzebue's works, into French "Menschenhass und Reue" is still a favourite on the stage.

of the same class in Germany <sup>(1)</sup>—which, it is true, is not saying a great deal in their favour. In the "*vis comica*" our Teutonic neighbours are really sadly wanting. Humour in its strict sense, they undoubtedly possess; but wit and gaiety seem absolutely foreign to their mood of mind. No wonder Schlegel did not admire Molière. Their love of analysis and symbol intrudes even into comedy itself. They are always seeking for psychological reasons and wielding the scalpel of the anatomist instead of the shaft of ridicule. They would fain dissect the very dew-drop as it sparkles in the sun-beam, or the ray of light which beams on the surface of the lake. Any one who has taken the trouble to wade through the productions which the Germans dignify by the name of comedy, or to sit out those, nightly represented on the stage at Vienna, Berlin and Frankfort, will we think agree with us in our low estimate of their worth.

It is possible that Kotzebue's personal character may have contributed to the re-action which has destroyed his fame. Puffed up by his amazing popularity, he considered himself equal, if not superior, to the loftiest geniuses of his native-land, and offended even the gentle and modest Schiller by his vain and pompous demeanour. To this may be added his well-known devotion to the existing form of government, and his dislike to innovation of every description. In a weekly journal of which he was editor he main-

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(1) See for instance the "*Comödiantin aus Liebe*", the "*Actress for Love*", of which two capital scenes are translated in Howitt's *Rural and Domestic Life of Germany*.

tained that no constitution could please all parties, that, however unanimous they might be in demanding one, no sooner would it be granted than the innovators would commence quarrelling among themselves and tearing it to pieces to construct something new. The Germans, he added, were as yet too little versed in the practical science of government to break down the ancient barriers which afforded them a salutary, if occasionally an annoying, restraint.

In Kotzebue's opposition to liberal principles, no English heart will sympathise; but have not the events of 1848 sufficiently proved that, in his estimate of his countrymen, he was not so greatly mistaken? At all events right or wrong the crime by which he perished <sup>(1)</sup> ought not the less to call down general execration, and it is lamentable, indeed, to behold a minister of the Gospel <sup>(2)</sup> bound above all others to condemn violence and crime, writing to the mother of the assassin to congratulate her on having given birth to such a son!

Even in our own times political assassination, strange to say, still finds disciples and partisans who justify themselves by recalling the example of Brutus. They forget that he whose memory they invoke lived in days when all moral laws were in a sort of

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(1) He was assassinated by a student of the name of Sand, an enthusiastic democrat, who regarded him, as the enemy of liberty and who on obtaining admittance to him, under the pretext of business, stabbed him to the heart.

(2) Leben von Kotzebue von Dr. Töring. Ueber 27 Acten-Auszüge aus dem Untersuchungsproceß.

chaos, and no divine ray shone from on high to guide the human mind when assailed by doubts and temptations its own unassisted reason was too weak to solve.—A purer faith has taught us a better and loftier code of virtue, while experience has sufficiently proved how little the crime effects the end it has in view. To what result did the murder of Cæsar lead? To the deeper abasement and slavery of Rome. Assassination encircles even the tyrant's brow with the halo of the martyr. Charlotte Corday sacrificed her life to destroy Marat. If ever crime was pardonable, nay almost commendable, it was here. Yet the death of this monster did not hasten by an hour the deliverance of her country. Providence, in its inscrutable wisdom, forbids that murder shall bear any useful fruits, and common-sense tells us that such a principle once admitted there would be an end to law, order and security, that the good and the bad, the despot and the father of his people would be involved in the same destruction, and that the vilest bravo with a poignard in his hand, would be master of a nation's destinies. No man must be permitted to be at once judge and executioner, to hold the balance and the sword, nor can any pretext palliate a crime which strikes at the very basis of society. But we must return to the drama.

Iffland's comedies, highly lauded as they have been and still are, appear to us far inferior to Kotzebue's, defective in plot and arrangement, tedious, heavy and uninteresting. In the words of a modern author "he gave dra-

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(1) Hawkins's Germany.

matic lessons of domestic economy. The public after being plagued with their debts and disorders at home, had to endure a second edition at the theatre." (1) From all these the new school delivered the stage, and this sufficiently explains its popularity. It substituted the Middle Ages with their gorgeous romance, their glittering pageants, their violent emotions for the details of the kitchen and the store-room. Knights in helm and buckler took the place of burghers in dressing-gown and slippers. Instead of whitewashed parlours, nothing was to be seen but battlemented keeps, towers and turrets.

The influence of the romantic school on the drama, differed considerably from that which it exercised on lyric poetry. In one respect, indeed, it was alike in both, viz: in its tendency to invest everything with a dreamy, abstract transcendental hue. But while in lyric verse this spirit predominated, in the drama it was largely mingled with other elements, with power and passion, with stormy and exciting incidents, often carried indeed to the very extreme of exaggeration and absurdity, but still forming a delightful contrast to the vapid and wearisome inanities which preceded them. The Romanticists dealt almost exclusively with the perturbed elements of the human mind, with the fearful secrets of the heart. To enhance the effect produced by these, they called to their aid the mysteries of the dark side of nature and ransacked the supernatural world for its horrors and its marvels. The principal of these "*power-men*", as they were called, are Werner, Müller, Grillparzer and Henry Kleist. The lives of

the two former may serve as beacons to warn the young and ardent from the paths which lead to vice and dissipation.

Godfrey Adolph Müllner was born at Langendorf near Weisenfels, on the 17<sup>th</sup> October 1774. His childhood was far from happy. His mother, a woman of violent and capricious temper, had two sons by a former marriage, and evinced little affection for her last-born child whose character, indeed, too closely resembled her own to render him very easy of management. From the care of a tutor he was sent to a public school and thence, as usual, to the University at Leipsic to study jurisprudence. The profession of the law, however, was little to his taste, and he spent far more time in roystering merriment and noisy revelry than in poring over musty books. What few hours remained from these improving pursuits were devoted to poetry, and in 1794 he published a romance under the alluring title of "The Incest" which obtained as little success as it deserved. Yet even amid this mass of horror and absurdity, a keen eye may detect a power and originality of no common order. The ill-success of this attempt did not extinguish Müllner's literary ardour; but a passion of a still more engrossing nature soon completely occupied his thoughts, love for a young and beautiful girl, the daughter of a Saxon officer who resided in the neighbourhood, an intimate friend of the family. He met, however, with violent opposition in a quarter whence he least expected it. His mother had already privately sought the hand of the fair damsel for her favourite son, and was so irritated at what she called

the audacity of his younger brother in venturing to cross her plans that she threatened to disinherit him if he did not instantly renounce his pretensions, the little fortune of the family being entirely at her disposal. But she had to do with a spirit as haughty and as resolute as her own. Müllner, indignant at an injustice so palpable, absolutely refused submission, declaring that the lady alone should be judge between his brother and himself. The former retorted in very angry language, and the result might have been terrible, had not sudden illness terminated the strife by carrying off the elder brother and thus destroying the mother's ambitious plans. Proud and passionate as he was, Müllner had warm affections, and this tragic event deeply moved him. In 1796 he left the University with high honours and returned to Weisenfels; but his mother's continued opposition to his marriage rendered his home insupportable, and he undertook the situation of actuary in a neighbouring village. Here he fixed his abode, working with an assiduity foreign to his nature, stimulated by the hope of soon obtaining by his own efforts an honourable independence sufficient to enable him to wed the object of his constant and devoted love. Three years thus passed by. At the end of that period his mother died, and Müllner inheriting a portion of her property, sought and won the hand of her who almost from his childhood, had been the day-star of his affections. From a marriage contracted under circumstances apparently so auspicious, hallowed by a mutual love which had "grown with their growth and strengthened with their strength", the hap-

piest results might have been anticipated. But it was far otherwise. Lovely in person, fond of amusement and well fitted for society, but with a mind little cultivated, Amelia was completely unfitted for the retired life and humble duties to which she suddenly found herself condemned. She probably expected from the husband the same devoted attention she had been accustomed to receive from the lover. Great was her astonishment and indignation when she found herself mistaken. In fact Müllner's affection, sincere and passionate as it undoubtedly was, could not subdue his natural irritability of temper or induce him to make allowance for the little follies and exigencies of a spoiled beauty. Had he found in his wife tastes more congenial to his own, all might yet have been well. But the fair Amelia had no love for any of the muses, save Terpsichore, and would not have sacrificed a waltz for all the verses in the world. Had she only lent a delighted ear to his own productions, and drank them in when he recited them, he would probably have forgiven her indifference to literature in general or indeed have rather hailed it as an advantage. A highly-cultivated mind is not usually regarded as a recommendation by German husbands. They are rather too apt, soon after marriage, to merge the friend and companion into the housewife, and to dread lest a taste for reading, should interfere with domestic duties. But poor Amelia could not sit quiet for hours, listening to poetry even from the lips of her beloved, and after a few efforts which always ended in angry reproaches on the part of the husband and tears on that of the wife, Müllner



gave up the attempt and left her society for that of more congenial spirits. Not even the tie generally so powerful, of a young family, served to cement the bonds of domestic union between this ill-sorted pair and after the lapse of a few years they seldom met except at table.

Müllner sought to console himself for his deception in the partner of his life by poetical compositions. For some time these attracted little attention. But in 1812 he produced the "Schuld" or "Crime" which at once called forth warm though not unmingled admiration. In this extraordinary poem, for as a poem it must be regarded rather than as a drama, he adopted the idea of that guiding and overpowering destiny which pervades the Greek tragedies. The personages, however, are deficient in force of will and decision of purpose, and it is difficult or impossible in modern times and among a Christian people to carry out the idea of an all-pervading all-commanding fate which, among the ancients, supplied the place of an over-ruling Providence. Individuality of character there is none; but the strange wild tone, the vivid imagery, the exquisite melody of the verse lend it a singular charm. As this play, we believe, is little known in England, we venture to give a brief analysis. Hugo, Count of Orandur, lineal descendant, as is believed, of one of the most ancient families in the North of Europe, has wedded a lovely Spanish dame, the widow of a dear friend, and has brought her and her boy to his ancestral castle. Their existence is solitary and silent, nothing enlivening the gloom save the childish mirth of the young Otho, and

the serene cheerfulness of the gentle Jerta, Hugo's supposed sister. Elvira's happiness is troubled by the consciousness of a secret sin, that of having loved her husband, though innocently, while yet the wife of another, and by a superstitious dread lest he should be torn from her as a punishment. Hugo too, though adoring Elvira, is sad and gloomy. In the first scene Elvira is sitting alone in the twilight playing on the harp.

As the last note that fondly lingers,  
Beneath the minstrel's fairy fingers.  
Then slowly, sweetly melts away;  
As drops upon the crystal tide,  
In circling eddies sweeping wide,  
Grow narrower, in their graceful play,  
Till on the shores, with flow'rets bright  
They slowly vanish from the sight,  
Thus would I vanish, were my spirit free,  
And melt like that sweet sound in viewless harmony.

Far from my dear, my native land,  
Rock'd in this cradle of the storm,  
Where with its too entrancing band,  
Love binds this heart so fond and warm—  
Will e'er kind Fate's almighty hand  
Restore me to my native land!

The entrance of Jerta interrupts these sad reflections, and recalls her to anxiety for her husband who is following the chase. To Jerta's inquiries whether no husbands hunt in Spain, she replies:

"Oh, there softer winds are breathing,  
'Tis the land that nature loves;  
The vine its tendrils there is wreathing;  
'Tis through silvery olive-groves,  
That the hunter seeks his prey;  
All things there are bright and gay.

Here, amid the tempest's shock,  
'Neath the pine-trees' awful shade,  
High upon the ice-bound rock  
Where his rest the Eagle's made,  
Trusting to his weapons, there,  
The hunter meets the swarthy bear.  
Wolves around are wildly howling,  
And hyenas fiercely prowling;  
While beneath his daring tread  
The Abyss is darkly yawning  
And avalanches o'er his head  
Thunder down their fearful warning.  
With impetuous force they go  
And drag him to the depths below.

Presently a stranger is announced, a Spaniard. This fills Elvira's soul with painful recollections, and she retires to silence and solitude. Hugo comes at length. In a conversation with Jerta in which Elvira is not present, he discloses that he is not her brother, that he is but Orandur's adopted son. The Countess lost her only boy, an infant, during her residence in the Pyrenees while her husband was fighting in a distant land, and to conceal this calamity had adopted, as her own, the child of a Spanish lady who, to avoid the fearful prediction that the child she bore in her womb would destroy his brother, consented to the

fearful sacrifice. On the birth of Jerta, however, the Countess had confessed all to her lord. Having already learnt to love the boy as his own, but too proud to profit by the deception, Orandur communicated the facts to his Sovereign who gave him a royal secret diploma authorizing Hugo to bear his name and enjoy his inheritance.

The discovery that he whom she had loved from childhood with more than a sister's tenderness is not her brother destroys Jerta's peace, while Elvira, when informed of the fact, is torn by pangs of mingled jealousy and suspicion. The introduction of the stranger who is no other than the father of Elvira's first husband strikes Hugo with such evident dismay as to arouse the suspicion of the Spaniard, already ill-disposed towards the successor of his son. Explanations ensue; it is discovered that Hugo is in fact Carlos's brother, that his mother was the Spanish lady who gave up her infant to avoid, as she vainly hoped, the terrible prophecy—thus darkly fulfilled by the very means she used to thwart it, and Hugo is overwhelmed with remorse for, it is by his hand, that Carlos has fallen. Stung by the reproaches with which he had assailed him at the moment when he was about to tear himself for ever from her he adored, he had struck down the man for whom he had, more than once, ventured his life. The sequel may be imagined. Hugo already torn with anguish while he deemed he had spilt the blood of a friend only, can no longer endure existence now he learns it was that of a brother. He destroys himself. Elvira, unable to live without him, stabs herself to

the heart, with the same dagger, while the father and Yerta survive to mourn the dead. Such is this wild drama which despite its exaggerated tone exercises a strange fascination on the mind.

The reputation of the "Schuld" was not confined to Germany. It was performed at the Court of Russia, and the Empress Elizabeth sent the author a superb diamond-ring as a proof of her admiration. Unfortunately in proportion as his dramatic fame increased Müllner's domestic happiness declined. His temper became every day more violent; that of his wife was scarcely more gentle and they seldom met without breaking forth into mutual reproaches. In the year 1829 he was suddenly seized with a paralytic fit and after lingering a few days speechless, he died. Müllner had many admirers but few friends. His fine person, brilliant eyes, and, when he pleased, charming manners delighted all whose good-will he thought it worth the trouble of winning; indeed when animated by poetical enthusiasm his eloquence carried away all before it. But he had never learned to control either his temper or his passions, and with advancing years he became completely their slave. The deception he experienced in the object of his youthful affection exercised a deleterious influence on his mind; it rendered him cold and indifferent alike to love and friendship. In conversation he was caustic and brilliant. He too often indulged his wit at the expense of truth and charity, and would at any time rather have lost his friend than his *bon mot*. His poetic genius displays power, imagination and energy in no common degree; but the elements of crime, horror and

remorse are too frequently employed as staple commodities and often supply the place of all originality of thought, or delineation of character. <sup>(1)</sup>

There is scarcely any German poet whose name is better known in England, than Werner, nor have many men enjoyed greater celebrity or rather notoriety in their own day. He has been honoured by a whole chapter in *Mad<sup>me</sup> de Staël's* "Allemagne" and by an article in *Carlyle's Essays*. The latter might seem to render any further notice superfluous had not new sources of information since presented themselves which afford us closer glimpses into this agitated and varied existence. Our limits, unfortunately, will allow of our entering into a few details only, not noticed by his English biographer. Left fatherless in infancy, brought up by a mother, in whom the dawn of incipient insanity already frequently clouded her better reason, Werner was never subjected to that careful discipline, that mental control, so indispensable for a nature like his. There was no guiding hand to restrain, no voice to call him back, and even as at the university he plunged into more than the ordinary follies of youth, so through his whole career, did he yield with scarcely a struggle, to every wild and unbridled passion. Yet, amid all his reckless dissipation, there survived a natural warmth and nobility of soul which no profligacy could completely destroy. This peculiarly displayed itself in his conduct towards his mother. For three long years did he watch beside her sick-bed with unwearied

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(1) *Leben von Müllner*, von Spitzig. Müllner's Werke, letzte Ausgabe.

tenderness. His heart, inconstant in every other affection, remained unchanged in this — and, when at length she expired in his arms, he mourned her with an anguish no less deep than lasting. “My friend”, he writes to Hitzig, one of his biographers, “God strikes with an iron-hammer on our hearts and we must be more than stone if we do not feel it, more than mad if we do not fling ourselves in the dust before him and annihilate our own miserable identity in the sense of His. I wish I could find words to depict the condition of my soul on the day when, for the first time for eighteen years, I again received the Communion. The death of my mother, that pure holy being, that martyr who, for eight long years, had been confined to her bed amid inexpressible sufferings overwhelmed me with anguish, much as I ought to have wished her release both for her sake and my own. Oh, my friend! how heavily do my youthful sins weigh on my soul. Though I and my wife watched devotedly beside my mother’s bed during the last months of her existence, living almost exclusively for her and suffering much for her sake, what would I not give to wake her for one single day, to pour forth my oppressed heart in tears of penitence, to implore her pardon and her blessing! My beloved friend, cause your parents no sorrow. No earthly voice can wake the dead. God and our parents — these ought ever to be first in our sight. All the rest is but of little importance.” (1) Unfortunately Werner acted on this last doctrine, and sad

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(1) Lebensabriß von F. L. G. Werner, von Hitzig. Berlin 1828.

indeed were its results to his peace and happiness. The wife he speaks of as sharing his vigils was his third. From the two first, of whom we can discover no details, he had been already divorced. The last partner of his destinies was a Polish girl of humble birth, but of surpassing beauty. As she could not speak a word of Werner's native tongue, nor he of her's, it is really difficult to conjecture by what means their courtship was carried on. They married, however, and for more than five years all was sun-shine. "My wife", he says to Hitzig, "does not make much progress in German, but we have found out another language which answers very well. The rustling of the winds, the wave, the forest-tree speak to our hearts and form as it were a connecting link between us."

But not long after his mother's death the horizon changed. His dissipated habits, sobered for awhile by the melancholy scenes he had witnessed, returned with more than their former force. His post at Warsaw as "Kammer-Secretair" or Secretary of the Exchequer, which he had occupied since 1793 left him but too much leisure on his hands. A portion he employed in dramatic productions; the rest—unfortunately the largest—in pursuits of a far less ennobling character. His salary and the two or three thousand pounds he had inherited from his mother were soon squandered, and his temper, soured by a remorse just sufficient to torment without reforming him, grew more and more irritable. He resigned his post and sought another; but as with infinite *naïveté* he demanded one in which there was "a good income and

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little to do", he bade fair to wait some time for it. The difficulty, was solved, however, sooner than he himself expected. By the interest of an intimate acquaintance, Rath von Kund who stood high in ministerial favour, he received a more lucrative appointment at Berlin, whither the Rath himself removed at the same period. Werner was warm in his acknowledgements. Engrossed in his own dissipated pursuits, utterly neglecting the woman he had once so passionately loved, he had never even perceived that the attentions of his friend had assumed a most significant character, and was not a little amazed when the lady declared she would live with him no longer, and demanded a divorce. Conscious of his own sins, Werner made no reproaches to his wife on the secret motives which, he must have perceived, influenced her determination. He yielded a sad but immediate consent, and thus was broken his third and last matrimonial engagement. In his letters to Hitzig he declares in the most solemn manner that his wife is guiltless, and that he only was to blame. "I am not a bad man", he adds in a burst of touching self-reproach; "but, in too many respects, a weak, capricious, avaricious being, unfitted I feel to make any woman happy. God help and strengthen me!" It is singular to observe the strange mixture of religious feeling and gross sensuality which characterised this singular man. His life was passed in a perpetual conflict between the indulgence of profligate desires and the remorse occasioned by that very indulgence. He was continually repenting and forming plans of amendment which the very first temptation sufficed to overcome.

Maria's separation from Werner was soon followed by her marriage with the Councillor, and the uninterrupted happiness which attended this second union, severed only by death, seemed to prove that the fault, as Werner declared, was on his side alone. The strangest part of the story, at least to our English ideas, is that Werner continued to live on terms of intimacy with his former wife and her husband; but to those acquainted with German habits and manners, this somewhat startling proceeding will not appear so extraordinary. There is no country in which purer domestic happiness and domestic virtue are to be found than in Germany; but there is also no country in which, when once those holy bonds are transgressed, so great a license is exercised and permitted. Divorces are easily obtained, and the love of change so natural to the human heart renders the temptation too often irresistible. We will not attempt to enter into the grave and difficult question as to how far divorce is desirable. If, on the one hand, it is clear that its absolute denial inflicts much misery, more especially on the feebler sex, on the other it is equally evident that a too great facility entails infinite peril on social order and happiness. The family, is the corner-stone of society and the indissolubility of the marriage-tie alone invests it with that holy character which imposes, to a certain degree, even on the most profligate and the most reckless. If the bond can be broken on every slight pretext, a moment of ill humour, of discontent or jealousy, then it becomes only an ordinary every-day contract. The French Revolution furnished an example of the evils arising from this

facility, and the moral confusion which was the result, was not without an important influence on the complete dissolution of social and political order which ensued. (1)

In 1806 Napoleon entered Berlin, and as all public functions were for the moment suspended, Werner determined to fly the painful spectacle of his country's degradation and spend some years in travelling. He was every-where well received; for the fame of his dramas had gone before him. At Interlaken he made the acquaintance of Mad<sup>me</sup> de Staël, at that village feast, of which she gives so animated a description in her "Allemagne", and not long afterwards he repaired by her invitation to Coppet, where he spent some delightful weeks in the society of his gifted hostess, Schlegel, B. Constant and other eminent personages. He would scarcely have been able to indulge his wandering propensities, but for a pension of one thousand thalers, (about one hundred a-year) settled on him by the munificent Prince-Primate Dalberg.

Although Werner's Journal does not give us any very exact information of his state of mind during this period, there is every reason to believe that it was disquieted by many mingled feelings, and above all by religious doubts of a most painful nature. If, like too many others, he neglected the clearest precepts of religion in his life and conduct, he still seems ever to have felt an ardent longing for some faith to guide him on his dreary and uncertain way.

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(1) Histoire de la société Française pendant le directoire, by Mess<sup>rs</sup> de Concourt. 1854.

His conscience, often dormant, was never completely callous, and he was perpetually tormented by a kind of chronic remorse which, at times, amounted to positive despair. It was these feelings, so strangely mingled, so confused, added to the consciousness of own utter incapability to conquer, unaided by some higher power, his vicious propensities that first directed his thoughts towards Catholicism. Feeble and vacillating as he was, he felt an unspeakable desire to embrace a religion of which immutability is the first and most essential characteristic. Tainted with sin which had degraded him even in his own esteem, he turned with feverish eagerness to a faith which, through the lips of its ministers, offered that pardon he himself scarcely dared implore. He had found, as he tells us, in Lutheranism neither strength nor consolation, and at length in the year 1811 he proceeded to Rome, where he publicly adopted the Roman-catholic faith. From this period the details of his life become less numerous. He remained about two years at Rome studying theology, and in 1813 returned to Germany where, at Aschaffenburg, he was ordained Priest. Having assumed holy orders he proceeded to Vienna, mounted the pulpit and preached with great confidence and considerable success. "His sermons", says his biographer<sup>(1)</sup>, "were a strange mixture of sense and nonsense, keen wit and true and false religion, clear reasoning, and dark mysticism. lofty thought, and absurd bigotry. His oratory was rather that of the theatre than of the pulpit. Bu:

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(1) *Berner's Biographie von Dr. Schüp.* Grimma 1841.

his deep voice, fervent tone and commanding manner, produced a great effect upon his hearers, and his congregation was often more numerous than that of divines of purer life and sounder doctrine." From this period to his death, Werner divided his time between travelling, preaching and editing new editions of his works. In 1817 his health began to fail; but it was not till 1823 that his state became alarming. He died on the 17<sup>th</sup> of January. His last hours were cheerful and tranquil; and a simple inscription, composed by himself, implores the passer-by to pray for his poor soul and adds the hope that even "like Mary Magdalene much would be forgiven him because he had loved much."

Thus ended this restless, troubled existence in which were mingled so many conflicting elements of strength and weakness, of vice and virtue. Despite all his sins, there was something originally noble and generous in Werner's nature, marred indeed by a defective education, by the indulgence of the most baneful passions, by excesses of every description; yet lingering like a spark beneath a heap of ashes, occasionally glimmering forth with a faint and uncertain light, and ready to be illumined into a bright and steady flame if only a kindly breath had fanned it into life. His devoted love to his mother shews that his heart was still open to the purest affections; his continual though vain repentance, that he was not dead to the voice of conscience; his sympathy with all high and noble thoughts and actions that he was capable of appreciating and, under happier influences, might not have been incapable of adopting them.

Without attempting for an instant to palliate his many errors, we must pity while we condemn him. That his conversion to the Romish faith was at least sincere is evident from the sacrifices it entailed and from which he never for an instant recoiled. The pension which the Prince-Primate had conferred on him was instantly discontinued. He was assailed by every species of insult and invective; yet, far from repenting the step, he clung to it to the very last, as the drowning mariner clings to the plank which alone offers some hope of safety. How he reconciled those abuses and corruptions he had denounced so sternly in his "Martin Luther" with his ideas of true Christianity we do not pretend to explain; we know that human nature is a strange mass of contradictions and, that of all, the human heart is perhaps the greatest.

As an author Werner has been at one time too highly praised, at others too much depreciated. Many of the elements of dramatic excellence he decidedly possessed in a high degree. A bold varied and glowing imagination, wealth of fancy, command of language, deep sympathy with all human sufferings, all human wrongs and an intense admiration for every thing great and good. But all these are tainted and, indeed, frequently nullified by the absence of a clear conception of his own meaning, by a strange mingling of the allegorical and the real, not blended in harmonious beauty as in the recitals of Tieck and La Motte Fouqué, but huddled together in most inexplicable confusion. Such is his tragedy "Der Sohn des Thales" or "Son of the Valley", in which the fate of Jacques de Moley and his gallant brethren forms the

ground-work, but, to use Mr Carlyle's expressions, is "so buried in a mass of mystical theology, masonic mummary, cabalistic traditions and Rosicrucian philosophy, that no power could-work it into dramatic interest." (1) To this Essay we refer our readers for an analysis of this piece and those which immediately succeeded it, "Die Templer von Cypern", "The Templars in Cyprus" &c.

If these had been his sole productions, Werner's name would probably have been soon forgotten. It was his "Martin Luther", his "Attila" and, above all, his "29<sup>ten</sup> Februar" which so long rendered him one of the most popular authors in Germany. "Luther" was welcomed with a burst of enthusiasm from one end of the land to the other and continues a favourite even to the present day. It is infinitely superior to the "Templars" in unity of plan and dramatic interest; but in correct delineation of character it is decidedly wanting. Luther is far too ideal, too fantastic; Charles the fifth is a decided failure. We cannot imagine him rhodomontading and boasting like a Bobadil or a Mr de Crac. Catherina von Bona, the proud high-souled, warm-hearted woman, is here turned into a sort of visionary enthusiast. While detesting Luther and his faith with more than the ordinary hatred of her church, she has conceived a strange wild passion for a form she has beheld in a dream and which she calls her angel, her ideal. On seeing Luther she discovers this bright vision is no other than the image of the reformer himself; of course she falls deeply and

(1) Critical and miscellaneous essays. Life and writings of Werner. 1828.

passionately in love with him. It is impossible for any one who has seen the portrait of Luther by Lucas Cranach to suppress a smile at the idea of such a countenance, however excellent, sublime or devout the individual to whom it belonged, inspiring a young and beautiful girl with a sudden and overwhelming passion. Luther's marriage, as we know, was a very much less romantic affair.

The strange little Theresa, Catherine's convent-friend and confidante, half earthly half supernatural, and a still stranger youth, Luther's protégé, play an important but not very intelligible part in the drama, flitting hither and thither in the most unaccountable fashion, and dying at last or rather fading away at the very moment when for the first time, their lives seemed likely to be of use.

"Attila", which appeared in 1808, displays powers of a higher order than "Luther". It is less obscured by mysticism, the *dramatis personæ* are more like real living beings. The interest mainly rests on Etzel himself and on his affianced Hildegunde. The latter is an historical personage, though history tells us little of her, save that the king of the Huns, after having slain her father and her brothers, forced her to become his wife, and that next morning he was found dead, weltering in his blood, his bride seated beside him. (1) Of her antecedents we know nothing. Werner presents her as harbouring, deep within her heart for years, the project of vengeance against the destroyer of her race. "Tis no calamity", she exclaims,

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(1) The Attila of Romance and History. Vol 1st p. 106 — 110.



To perish nobly on the battle-field,  
 Or of the glorious wounds in battle won.  
 Shall he who foully murdered all I loved  
 Die as the virtuous die—an honour'd death?  
 No! I will lull his fiery soul to sleep,  
 Will make him drunk with insolence and blood,  
 Then, when all chance is fled that late remorse  
 Or penitence might win Heaven's pitying grace,  
 Then will I plunge the sword into his breast  
 And hurl him down—not unto death alone,  
 That would be nought—but to eternal doom.

The scene in which Attila pronounces judgement  
 on those brought before him is fine and striking.  
 His adopted son is accused of perjury.

ATTILA TO WLADIMIR.

I've lov'd and cherish'd thee as mine own son.  
 With joy have I beheld thy noble deeds;  
 But perjury is the deadliest of crimes;  
 For in truth only shines eternal light  
 Speak! art thou guilty?

*Wladimir.* Yes!

*Attila.* One last embrace!  
 Now take him from my sight; let the wild horses  
 Tear him asunder!

*Wladimir (is led away).*

*Attila (who has gazed after him in silent anguish.)*  
 It is an awful duty to be judge.

*Druid.* A fratricide!

*Attila's (springing from his seat with terror.)*

The hour of judgement's o'er  
 Away away. (*aside*) Oh! I too slew my brother!

This burst of remorse is finely and naturally rendered, and the character of Attila, on the whole, is tolerably true to history, less ferocious than he is represented in the Latin and Scandinavian legends, less mild and noble-minded than in the German. The weak and licentious Valentinian too is well portrayed. We behold him in his gorgeous palace engaged in a game of ball with his nobles, while Attila with his conquering army is almost already at the gates of Rome; we see Honoria, his sister, whom he has robbed of her inheritance and who cherishes a wild fantastic passion brooding over her real and imaginary wrongs, behold the great Ætius, last of the Roman generals, gazing with contemptuous pity on the wretched king, and hear his proud reply to the intreaties of the Empress Mother that he will raise his victorious sword in the defence of Rome.

## ÆTIUS.

Where then is Rome? in these stone monuments?  
Rome is where Romans are! Where shall we find them?  
Those who remained have perished for their country.  
We live and die, and no one knows for what.  
The Romans left the plough for victory,  
We fly the fight for the luxurious couch;  
Mutius plunged his hands into the flames,  
Curtius sprang gladly in the yawning gulf,  
Brutus destroy'd the friend whom best he lov'd,  
And Cato died in fetters, and yet free!  
And wherefore? for the thought the glorious thought  
That they were Romans!

The scene between St. Leon and Attila when the bishop implores the fierce conqueror to spare Rome is a failure. It possesses in itself so many elements of grandeur that, if well drawn, it could scarcely fail to be deeply impressive; but here Werner's love of long speeches, his besetting sin, comes sadly in the way, and mars the whole effect. The same may be said of the last Act where Hildegunde, on the bridal eve, stabs Attila to the heart. It is really inconceivable to find the author putting long, mystic, artificial tirades into the mouths of his *dramatis personæ* at such a moment; yet so it is. The whole character of St. Leon is a series of contradictions. He aids and abets Honoria's intention to fly from Rome and wed the king of the Huns, though he knows this action will entail the ruin of his country. He predicts Attila's murder, yet does nothing to prevent it. In short he is a vain pompous mysterious personage, instead of the calm, pure and noble figure the annals of the past present to our view. The character of Honoria is a complete deviation from the truth of history; but this is perhaps excusable. Had the poet represented her as she really was, weak, vain and egotistical, ready to sacrifice without a moment's hesitation the welfare and even the existence of her native-land to her dreams of ambition and projects of revenge, had he shown her to us as already the wife of another who, though vastly her inferior in birth and rank, she had been compelled to marry to conceal the consequences of a guilty intrigue, the portrait might have been more faithful, but far less agreeable.<sup>(1)</sup>

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(1) Attila, Trauerspiel.

The "29<sup>th</sup> of February" is of all Werner's dramas the most popular. The construction of the piece is of extreme simplicity. The scene is a lonely cottage amid the Alpine snows. The *dramatis personæ* three only in number, the Cotter, his wife and their son, who, after years of absence, returns full of dreams of peace and joy to the paternal roof, whence he had been expelled in his childhood. His parents do not recognise him. Sunk into abject poverty they are threatened with expulsion from their humble home, if by the following morning they do not raise a sum they have no means of obtaining. They offer their visitor all they have to offer, a crust of bread and a glass of water; but he draws forth wine and meat, of which he invites them to partake. After a while the host, under the unusual stimulus of such good cheer, recounts the dark story of his youth. He had been a soldier—had returned home after years of service—had wedded—against his father's will—the fair, but portionless orphan of a village-pastor whom he had loved from childhood. The vindictive old man never forgave him or his bride. One day the soldier found his wife in tears; his father, as usual, had been loading her with taunts and reproaches. A terrible scene ensued; and carried away by fury, the son hurled the knife at the old man's head with but too sure an aim.

"And from that fatal hour

I still have been pursued by some malignant power.  
We loved each other, aye, that vow was never broken,  
And yet it seemed as though his awful spectre stood  
Betwixt us from the day that fatal curse was spoken,  
And all I looked upon was tinged—was tinged with blood.

His wife has a son.

Upon his arm there was a scythe blood-red,  
The sign of Cain — it spoke his doom on earth.

Five years pass by, and a girl is born to them. Here the guest starts up with every sign of emotion. One day when the children were playing together — they had seen their mother kill a fowl that morning — the fatal idea occurred to them to re-enact the scene. The boy took the knife, and in an instant his sister lay dead — murdered by her brother's hand. The wretched father loaded him with curses; the boy fled the parental roof, and, after some years past amid strangers, joined a band of Swiss mercenaries who enter the service of the king of France and are supposed to have perished on the fatal 10<sup>th</sup> of August. Meanwhile all had gone ill with the miserable parents, till they had sunk to their present state of utter destitution. The son listens with deep and repressed emotion. He longs to throw himself at their feet; but at length resolves to await the return of morning. He retires to rest in a chamber separated from the parlour only by a screen. The clock — one of the few articles of furniture remaining in the cottage — strikes midnight; yet a few hours and the wretched pair will be driven forth from their last refuge in the wintry cold. The old man remembers, the stranger had said he had gold; all his wilder passions are roused; dark fearful schemes begin to float before his brain; he overcomes the remonstrances of his horrified wife by the threat of flinging himself over the precipice if she opposes his design. He enters the chamber and plunges the fatal knife into

the bosom of the sleeper. Roused by the blow, the stranger has strength only to utter the words "I am thy son" and to draw forth from his bosom the papers which confirmed the awful tidings. The wretched father gives himself up to justice.

That the situations in this drama are of the deepest and most harrowing interest none can deny. There is something inexpressibly awful in the fearful doom which hangs over this wretched family, in the silence and solitude of that Alpine cottage where, in the dark midnight-hour, we see the parent, already a parricide, murder his only child, that child whose infant hands had been stained with a sister's blood. It is the fate of the Atrides transported into humble life, and if on the one hand, as Mad<sup>me</sup> de Staël observes, "the picture of crime thus transferred to the ranks of the people loses that grandeur which alone accords with the ideal" on the other it must be allowed that this very circumstance, by bringing it more within the range of our sympathies and comprehensions, deepens the effect it produces on the mind.

Werner's sermons manifest considerable rhetorical powers<sup>(1)</sup> but are diffuse and unequal. Some of his religious poems display both fervour and tenderness.<sup>(2)</sup>

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(1) *Nachgelassene Predigten.* Wien 1836.

(2) *Sämmtliche Werke.* 14 Bände, mit Lebensbeschreibung von Dr. Schulze, 1841.

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## CHAPTER XII.

### CONTINUATION OF THE ROMANTIC SCHOOL. HENRY VON KLEIST. RAUPACH. GRILLPARZER.

HENRY VON KLEIST.—HIS STRANGE AND WAYWARD BOYHOOD.—FIRST LOVE.—SAD TERMINATION.—EXCENTRIC CONDUCT.—TRAVELS.—ACQUAINTANCE WITH WIELAND.—LITERARY PRODUCTIONS.—TALES.—DRAMAS.—“DER ZERBROCHENE KRUG.”—“INTHELISEA.” “KÄTHCHEN VON HEILBRONN.”—ARREST AND IMPRISONMENT.—LIBERATION.—“DER PRINZ VON HOMBURG.”—ACQUAINTANCE WITH HENRIETTE VON —.—FATAL RESOLUTION.—SELF-DESTRUCTION.—RAUPACH.—HIS DRAMAS.—THE “HOHENSTAUFEN.”—THE “NIBELUNGENHORT.”—BRIEF RESUMÉ OF HIS LIFE.—GRILLPARZER.—“DIE AHNFRAU.”—PRESENT STATE OF THE DRAMA IN GERMANY.—CONCLUSION.

HENRY von Kleist is less generally known than Werner or Müller beyond the limits of his native land. Yet his powers were of no common order, and, had they not been too often rendered nugatory by that diseased state of mind which frequently banished all harmony of design and arrangement, he might have claimed a foremost rank among the dramatic poets of Germany. His life is a tissue of vain dreams and self-created sufferings, fruitful in warning and replete with sad and painful interest. Kleist was of noble

family, but less richly endowed by fortune than by nature. He was born in 1776 at Frankfort on the Oder and, even as a child, exhibited a tendency to melancholy and reverie. Often would he steal from his play-mates to wander alone in the church-yard which lay near the paternal dwelling. The grave of his gallant name-sake seemed to have a peculiar attraction for the boy, while the recital of the literary celebrity and glorious death of the warrior-poet already excited the secret desire to emulate his fame.

In 1795 Kleist entered the army as ensign in a regiment of infantry, and was soon distinguished by his martial bearing and varied talents. His proud and sensitive spirit, however, could endure no control. A dispute with his commanding officer rendered it necessary for him to leave the service in less than three years after he had entered it, and he returned to Frankfort where he devoted himself to the study of history and philosophy with the intention of becoming professor at one of the universities. Ere long a new and engrossing passion absorbed all his thoughts and drew him from his retirement and his books. He loved. His affection was warmly returned; but not content with this assurance he insisted upon his *Wilhelmina* keeping the engagement a profound secret; not from the dread of any opposition on the part of her friends or of his own, but simply from his romantic fancy that the admission of a third person into their confidence would destroy something of the holiness of their young affection. These stolen meetings, so delightful to Kleist, were painful to the more right-minded girl, and she insisted on divulging the



secret. The consent of the respective families was asked and obtained, and the young pair were solemnly affianced; Kleist consoling himself for the loss of the mystery to which he had attached so high a price, by the increased cheerfulness and grateful affection of his betrothed. He was now happy, and fancied his bliss secure against all interruption. Although but a few houses separated him from his beloved and twelve hours rarely elapsed without their meeting, he daily wrote her the most tender letters, mingled with a strain of exhortation and instruction excellent in themselves, but somewhat extraordinary in a young and passionate adorer. In the summer of 1800 he left Frankfort for Berlin, to continue his studies and to further his advancement in life. He had relinquished the idea of becoming a professor, and desired to enter the service of the state, though in what capacity does not exactly appear. Meanwhile his correspondence with Wilhelmina continued unbroken. The following letter will give us some insight into his mental organization, and into that singular mixture of good sense and specious sophism which characterized him.

"All real improvement consists in this, my dearest, to be able to reflect wisely upon the end of earthly existence. To be always seeking and investigating the aim of our eternal existence, whether, according to Epicurus, its ultimate object be mere enjoyment, or, according to Leibnitz, the attainment of perfection, or, according to Kant, of mere dry duty, is fruitless and often dangerous even for men. They live in the future and forget the present. Judge yourself whether

beings so limited in faculties as we who, during our span of earthly existence, can see only a mere atom of eternity, should attempt to fathom the designs of Providence. But the destination of our earthly being we can undoubtedly discover, and the fulfilment of *this*, Providence may claim of us. It is possible, my dearest, your religion may command you, in your opinion, to do something for your future bliss. No doubt you have grounds for your belief, as I have for mine; therefore I do not fear that this little difference of sentiment will in any way interfere with our affection. All I would intreat is that, in your care for eternity, you do not neglect earthly duties. Too many believe they have done all that is required when they have fulfilled the outward observances of religion, such as going to church, saying their prayers, taking the sacrament twice a year &c. All these are merely human precepts, which have always differed at different periods, as they do at this very moment in various parts of the world. In these, therefore, the spirit of religion cannot be; for otherwise it would be indeed uncertain and variable. Who can answer that ere long another Luther may not arise and throw down all his predecessor has built up? But within us there is a higher precept that must be divine; for it is eternal and universal: "*do thy duty*". This contains the essence of all religions. I will not trouble myself as to my destiny hereafter lest it should make me forget my vocation here. I do not fear the punishment of Hell, because I fear my own conscience; I do not reckon on a reward beyond the grave, because I know I can secure one here."

In these strange doctrines we see blended those contradictory elements which mingle so largely in Kleist's whole character, the keen sense of all that is good, great and virtuous, a certain spirituality of feeling, darkened by the wildest scepticism and the most indomitable pride. Secure in his own fancied strength of mind and integrity of purpose, he imagined he could dispense with the restraints of religion and the truths of Revelation. They might be useful to weaker men; but were mere burdens to intellects of such lofty mould. He was yet to learn, too late, that to none were they more necessary than to his own.

From his religious opinions, he returns to the original subject of his letter, the vocation of woman. "That", he says, "is clear and undoubted; it is to become mothers and to bring up and educate virtuous men and citizens." "It is my birth day", he writes 10<sup>th</sup> of Oct.; "dearest Wilhelmina, do you think on me? What inexpressible delight lies in the reflection that our thoughts meet at this moment? All I call happiness can reach me through your hands alone, and if you yourself desire I should enjoy it, it will infallibly be mine. One engrossing idea, *for thee*, occupies my mind. I will now describe the wife who will make me happy. Do not fear that she will not be a being of this earth to be discovered only in heaven. I shall not expect the lily to shoot up in the air like the cedar. I shall not seek to mould a statue from the canvass, or to paint upon the marble. I feel how weak is this allegorical language in comparison with the feelings that animate my mind. Oh! could I only lend you a ray of the fire that flames within me! Could you only conceive how the

thought of making a perfect being of you calls forth every faculty of my soul! You will hardly believe it; but I often look for hours out of the window, and go half through the town and see nothing but one single image, you, and at your feet two children and on your knee a third; and I hear you teaching the youngest to speak, the second to feel, the eldest to think. I hear you softening the obstinacy of the one into firmness, mellowing the timidity of the other into modesty, and stimulating the curiosity of all into a thirst for knowledge. I see how, without doing much yourself, you teach them by your example all that is good, and shew them in your own image the loveliness of virtue. Lay the thought like an adamant shield to thy breast, "I am born to be a mother"; let every other dream or wish give place to this all-pervading sentiment. Learn then to despise the meaner ends of life; this alone will really exalt you. In this you will find your true happiness; every thing else will bestow only a moment's enjoyment; this will inspire you with self-respect—and when you have arrived at the goal, you will look back with satisfaction on your youth and not, like thousands of unhappy beings of your sex, mourn in hours of bitter solitude their neglected vocation and imperfect happiness. I do not desire you to cease to adorn your person, or to go into society, or to dance; but I wish to impress on your mind the conviction that there are higher enjoyments than a mirror or a ball-room can offer, the consciousness of inward beauty. Go into pleasant society; but always seek out the best and noblest hearts, that you may learn something

every-where. And thus let us advance hand-in-hand to our goal. Let your first object be, to fit yourself for a mother's duties; mine to prepare myself for those of a citizen, and our ultimate aim, that towards which we are both striving and which we can mutually secure each other, the bliss of wedded love!" "Dearest Wilhelmina", he says on a subsequent occasion, "your letter has afforded me unspeakable delight. Thus to yield to all my wishes, to identify yourself with all my interests! Oh assuredly the reward will not fail you. Upon this path of life for which you resign every thing which women usually prize, honours, wealth, luxury, you will all the more certainly find the most precious of earthly treasures—love. But let us not give ourselves up to mere empty dreams. It is true, when I think on the smiling valley which will one day embosom our cottage, and see myself in this cottage with thee, and my studies,—then, wealth and honours become despicable in my eyes, and I feel life has nought worth seeking save the fulfilment of this wish. But reason too must be consulted, and we must hear what she has to say. I am determined not to accept any office. Why not? How many answers are in my mind. I cannot perform duties which my reason is not allowed to investigate. I should be forced to do whatever the State demands of me, without inquiring if it is right or wrong. I must become a mere machine to carry out the most insignificant ends. I cannot; and besides I am not fit for office. Order, exactitude, patience, good temper, all are indispensable in every position, and in these I am absolutely deficient."

An agreeable prospect for his future wife! "Besides", he continues, "no appointment, not even that of minister would make me happy. No! I must find my felicity in my home or no-where. And need I become a minister to enjoy domestic bliss? Must I be buried in a City and plunged into a chaos of complicated affairs to be happy with my wife and my children? I will not speak of freedom; but of love and self-culture, those indispensable conditions of my future happiness. When I wished to devote myself to scientific investigations, a secretary would bring me a bundle of papers. While engaged in analyzing some great thought, the servant would announce that the ante-room was full of visitors. How I should curse wealth and rank and all the splendour of the world! No; I dare not enter any public office, because I despise all that it can give me. But have I the right to act thus? It is our duty, you will say, to be of use to our fellow-citizens. Cannot we do good without being paid for it? And if I may for once venture to speak the truth at the expence of my modesty, did I not do good when I was in Frankfort? To strengthen the belief in virtue in others by my own blameless conduct, to aid all who came within my reach so far as my means permitted, was not *that* doing good? To assist in forming *thy* mind, my sweet girl, was not that a good action? And to elevate myself one degree nearer the God-head—Oh surely the aim is sufficiently exalted; I need no other. But can I refuse? Is it possible? Wherefore not? You live at Frankfort, I at Berlin. Why could we not live together as well as separately?

Away with prejudice! How many beings enjoy with a few hundred thalers the bliss of love; and must we resign it because we are of noble birth? No! We will be human and enjoy the happiness which heaven has granted us. We will love each other, and that does not need much money; still it requires something, and how is that something to be obtained? There is the question. If I were inclined to wait, then all we should need would be patience. In a few years, I feel confident I shall succeed in making my fortune. But must we be separated so long? No! I cannot endure it. I must seek to quiet these restless longings which haunt me like phantoms. Were you once mine, I should pursue my aim calmly and unfalteringly. I am ready, you see, to resign all the gilded baubles of rank; and if we can exist together five or six years, all will go well. But is it possible? If it is, it is through you alone. Had my destiny led me to any other maiden, less easily contented, less unassuming than yourself, I should be compelled to suppress even the wish. But you likewise desire nothing save love and mental cultivation; you shall have both, the first more than you can dream of, the second as much as I can bestow. Nevertheless do not let your love mislead you. Luxury you will not require; but the necessities of life must never fail you. Reckon what you will need largely; let it be rather too much than too little. If under these conditions it is impossible to unite our destiny, we must wait for better times; but then, the future is dark, indeed. Meanwhile there is yet one means remaining namely, to gain a few hundred thalers a year by giving les-

sons. Do not start; endeavour rather to conquer all prejudice on the subject. Many men have begun humbly and finished their career royally. Shakespeare held horses and has become the marvel of posterity. Wait ten years, and it shall not be without pride that you embrace me." He then proposes to settle for awhile in the south of France and to give lessons in the German language and in philosophy, "*completely unknown in that country*". He concludes with the most passionate expressions, and the vow, whatever might betide, never to wed another.

Nothing can be more reasonable than the tone of these letters. But with his usual versatility of purpose Kleist suddenly renounced, for the moment at least, all the fond projects which had engrossed him. "Let me go", he writes to Wilhelmina, "let me travel; I cannot work; it is impossible! If I remain at home, I must lay my hands in my lap and do nothing! I will send you my portrait. I take your's with me. I will return so soon as I know what I ought to do! Fear not! something good must result from this inward conflict."

Some good certainly did result, if not from the conflict, at least from the change of scene; but only for a brief space, while on the other hand the expenses of the journey absorbed almost all that remained of Kleist's little patrimony. After spending some time at Leipsig, at Halberstadt and Göttingen, he proceeded to Coblenz and thence to Paris. But neither the new scenes which surrounded him, the splendour of the capital of France, nor the agreeable society into which he was soon introduced, could



chase the demon of melancholy. The gay manners of the Parisians, contrasting so painfully with his own gloomy mood of mind, saddened rather cheered him, and again the longing for a peaceful home, however humble, in the midst of those beauties of nature he passionately loved, his Wilhelmina at his side, mastered every other feeling. At once oversensitive and over-proud, he shrank alike from the pleasures and the trials of every-day life. His exaggerated ideas of independence not only forbade his filling any appointment, but actually led him to consider accepting money for literary composition as a degradation. He could not afford to write for fame only, so his talents lay idle, while his existence was wasted in vague longings for some undiscovered path which should unite all the conditions he deemed indispensable for happiness. His love of nature rendered the noise and bustle of a town intolerable; his love for literary society soon made him weary of rural solitude. In short, look where he might, he found, as he declared, no place in the world for him, or in plain words he found himself unfit for all or any. In this mood it was not easy to discover a quarter to which to turn for a livelihood. "It is impossible", he writes from Paris 10<sup>th</sup> October 1801, "to enter any new career in my native land. After having refused two honourable positions I cannot debase myself to seek a third. As to science I have given it up entirely; I cannot tell you how hateful a man of letters is in my eyes compared to a man of action. What then shall be done? Do you remember what aged men do when, for fifty years, they have sought for wealth

and honours? They sit down by their own fire-sides, and cultivate their fields. Tell me—would it not be wiser to begin where one desires to end? What unspeakable bliss must be in the consciousness of following one's vocation completely according to the will of nature. Peace from all passions! It is ambition which poisons our joys. Therefore I will tear myself from every connexion which forces me to strife, envy or rivalry. What think you? I have still a remnant of fortune which will suffice to purchase a cottage and farm in Switzerland. This will support me if I cultivate it myself. I write this coldly because I would not win you through your imagination; otherwise, for a pure heart, there is no position so overflowing with bliss.

But supposing I had this cottage, would no other wish remain ungratified? Should I not still want something? yes, a wife. And is there for me another in the world save thee? Think of the sacred moments we should enjoy together! Yet no, think now only on that which perhaps will render this position less charming in your eyes. Think on the duties which will fall to your share; but remember also the love that will reward them! I dare not *ask* such a sacrifice; it is only if you yourself could offer it! Your education, your tone of mind, your whole existence have been of a nature which do not render it utterly impossible; and yet—perhaps it is otherwise. Yes! I have no right to such a sacrifice; and even if you refuse it, I shall not doubt your love."

But this scheme, as was usual with every new project, engrossed Kleist's mind too completely to allow him

a moment's rest. "What say you to my plan?" he writes October 27<sup>th</sup>; "Freedom! the noblest description of labour! a property of my own! a wife! For me, no lot on earth can be more desirable; but for you—yet do not picture your position as utterly devoid of charms. It would, be indeed, for those in whom right feelings are wanting. But can I fear this from you? are you accustomed to extravagance or splendour? Are not the pleasures of a town-life mere empty baubles in your eyes? Can your soul delight in them? Does not one wish ever remain unfulfilled which such a future as I offer you alone can satisfy? In my last letter I begged you to examine the less pleasing side of the picture; but now for once look at it under its brighter aspect, and if you can only cast aside prejudice and weakness, how will the scale sink in its favour! Answer me one question; what is woman's first requirement? Surely the love of her husband. And is there any position which so enhances the delight of mutual tenderness, which renders two hearts so capable of giving and receiving it, as a tranquil country-life? Think you people love each other in a town? Perhaps so; but only when they have nothing better to do. The man has position, he is seeking after wealth and honour. That takes time. Enough would remain for love; but he has friends; he likes pleasure. Even when he is at home his mind is occupied by his amusements, his business, and a few hours therefore, are all he can devote to his wife. It is much the same with the woman, and that is one reason why I dread a town-life. But in the country the man works—for whom?

For his wife. He reposes from his labours—near whom? His wife. She is his all,—and if a maiden can choose such a lot, why should she hesitate?" He concludes by intreating a speedy reply, informing her that he intends wintering at Bern. That reply came but too soon; for it destroyed all his wild but glowing dreams. Wilhelmina, in her sincere attachment to her eccentric but gifted lover, had hitherto yielded a timid acquiescence in every plan, however strange and erratic; but the idea of flying with him from human society and burying themselves in some sequestered valley in Switzerland, with no prospect save that of digging and delving for the rest of their days, was too much even for her devotion. Besides, when no longer under the immediate spell of his eloquence, she began perhaps to perceive the unsound part of her lover's mind, and to be alarmed at the prospect of passing her existence with him far from her family and friends. She communicated this new scheme to her parents who, long secretly averse to the union, now insisted on their daughter's renouncing an engagement which threatened, in their opinion, inevitable misery. She obeyed. Her letters have not been given to the public; but they were, we are assured, tender and affectionate. Still the blow was not the less terrible. However versatile in all things else, in his love Kleist had remained constant. That had known no change, and confident in his powers of rendering its object happy he had never doubted her ultimate acquiescence in all his wishes. For some days he shut himself up, refusing to see any human being. But the resentment which mingled largely with his grief



ness over our acquaintance nor would it probably have ever ripened into intimacy, had I not learnt from my son that his lodgings at Weimar were exceedingly uncomfortable and that he would gratefully accept an invitation to spend the remainder of the time he intended passing in our neighbourhood at Osmanstadt. He stayed with me nine or ten weeks on the same footing as my own children. He seemed to love and honour me as a father, but I could not bring him to a frank and open confidence. Among many excentricities was a singular species of absence of mind, while conversing, so that a single word would call forth a whole train of ideas and prevent his listening or replying to what was being said to him; at last he confessed that at those moments he was engaged in thinking of his drama, that he was working at a tragedy; but that an ideal so lofty and perfect floated before his mind, that he had hitherto found it impossible to commit it to paper. He had indeed written many scenes, but had always burned them because they did not satisfy him. I gave myself unspeakable trouble to persuade him to complete his piece according to his original design, and to let me see it or, at all events, to finish it for his own satisfaction. At length, after much useless entreaty, I prevailed on him to repeat, from memory, some of the principal scenes and passages. I assure you I was amazed, and do not think I exaggerate in saying that if the spirits of Eschylus, Sophocles and Shakespeare were to create a tragedy, it would be like Kleist's; at least if the whole corresponded with the portion I heard. At that moment I felt convinced

that he was born to fill up a great vacuum in our dramatic literature, a vacuum which in my opinion has been left even by Schiller and Goethe, and you may suppose how earnestly I urged him to complete his work. Towards the middle of March we parted; he went to Leipsig and Dresden and in the course of a few months sent me a brief letter recommending me a friend who was passing through Weimar. Since then I have heard no more of him. When I remember all these circumstances, his indomitable pride based on conscious merit but humiliated by the hand of fate, the excentricity of his whole career, his fearful excitement, his ruined health and the misunderstanding which seemed to exist between him and his family, I really tremble". (1)

Kleist's state of mind, indeed, became more melancholy and irritable. Even change of scene failed to produce any favourable effect, and at Geneva and Paris he was equally wretched as at Weimar and Jena. At length, weary and discontented with himself and others, he yielded to the wishes of his family, and after devoting a considerable time to the studies necessary to fulfil his new duties, he entered the service of Prussia as secretary to the minister of war. The position was all he could desire. It opened bright prospects for the future. But all restraint was intolerable to a mind so constituted, and in little more than a twelve-month he threw up his appointment in disgust. At Königsberg, he now directed his steps whither he once more met her whom he had so truly and fondly loved

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(1) Wieland's *ausgewählte Briefe*. Vol. 6.

and who, but for his wild schemes and unstable character, would long since have become his own. She was now the bride of another. The first meeting was inexpressibly painful and embarrassing, but Kleist overcame his emotions and requested to be presented to her husband. A closer intimacy ensued, and he soon became their daily guest. Whether the influence of time, of new scenes and new affections had effaced Wilhelmina from his heart, or whether a sense of duty sealed his lips is uncertain; at all events, no reference to the past ever escaped him, and none who beheld him sitting calmly beside the young wife reading aloud or reciting passages from his own tragedy could have conceived that she had been for years the object of his passionate love, "the affianced of his soul" "the only bride on earth of him."

While at Königsberg, despite his fits of gloom and despondency, Kleist completed his first literary productions, his "Tales" "Michael Kohlhaus" the "Earthquake of Chili" &c. The first of these displays great graphic power, and despite many defects of plan and arrangement carries on the reader by the rapid narration and the charm of the style. A simple, guiltless but feeble-minded individual has been injured by a man of rank and wealth. Justice is refused him. Driven to madness, he arms himself against those laws which have inflicted on him so deadly a wrong, and joins a band of rebels and brigands. The arm of the state is too weak to seize and punish him. Martin Luther (the tale is in the sixteenth century) steps forward to aid it, and by his personal influence subdues and brings the misguided man to submission. His former



injuries are redressed; his crimes are pardoned. But now comes the hour of retribution. Though the laws have forgiven him, society refuses to admit into her bosom one so deeply stained with guilt. He beholds himself the object of disgust and horror, and ultimately falls into the snare laid for him by his enemies, and perishes. The mental conflict of the wretched man, the sense of wrong gradually deepening into hatred and implacable revenge—the struggles growing fainter as he advances in the path of crime, are finely portrayed. Towards the latter part of the tale, however, the style, hitherto clear and vigorous, becomes confused and sometimes almost unintelligible, as though a sudden darkness had gathered over the intellect of the writer. <sup>(1)</sup>

About the same time appeared his dramas the “*Familie Schroffenstein*”, the “*Zerbrochene Krug*”. The “*Familie Schroffenstein*” is founded on the hatred of two noble families and the mutual love of their children. But the cause of this hatred is enveloped in such complete mystery as to be perfectly inexplicable, and when, at length, it is cleared up, we discover that it rests altogether on a misunderstanding which a single word would have done away with. The conclusion of the piece when the two fathers—still by mistake—kill their own children, is at once burlesque and horrible. Yet the piece met with considerable success. “*Penthesilea*” transports us to a different region, to that of the Amazons. Despite some graceful poetry, the extravagance of the plot and of the

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(1) Kleist's Works.

characters renders it undeserving of serious notice. The "Zerbrochene Krug" is a comedy, and displays considerable powers of observation and insight into the follies of humanity. Perhaps, had it been left in its original dimensions, it might have obtained the success its author so fondly anticipated, for since then, restored to its pristine shape and slightly retouched, it has become a favourite on the German stage; <sup>(1)</sup> but Goethe, who on the whole had a good opinion of it and who brought it out at Weimar, unluckily divided it into five acts, and thus the interest never very engrossing was utterly destroyed. Kleist was so enraged at the coldness with which the piece was received, and which, justly or unjustly, he attributed to the alteration in its distribution, that he actually challenged Goethe, <sup>(2)</sup> and although the affair was more quietly arranged, the remembrance never ceased to rankle in his heart.

But neither in literary composition nor in the delights of friendship could Kleist's restless spirit find peace, and in 1807 he set off on foot for Berlin, then in the hands of the French. Having forgotten his passport, he was stopped at the gates, arrested as a spy or a deserter, and sent without further ceremony to Fort de Joux. The whole affair is involved in considerable mystery; but it affords a sufficient proof of the tyranny then exercised by the French in Prussia.

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<sup>(1)</sup> It was arranged by Theodor Döring and performed with great success at Berlin.

<sup>(2)</sup> *Geschichte der deutschen Literatur* von Schmidt. Vol. 5th. p. 12.

<sup>(3)</sup> Bülow's *Leben von Kleist*.

At first Kleist was kept a close prisoner. His apartment was not very far from that in which the unhappy Toussaint l'Ouverture wore away his existence. Kleist beguiled the dreary hours, as best he could, with books which were considerably supplied him by the commander, and with his pen. Strange to say, during this period, his mind seems to have been in a more healthy condition than during the greater portion of his existence. He had a real calamity to contend with, real trials to endure,—and the keen sense of injustice, the indignation at his country's wrongs and his own in some degree roused him from the state of nerveless hypochondriacism in which he was generally sunk. After some months, the captive was conveyed to Chalons-sur-Seine where he was allowed his liberty on *parole*, and ultimately obtained his release through the mediation of the Prussian ambassador. He settled at Dresden, where he supported himself by contributions to the periodicals &c. And now once again better and brighter days seemed to dawn upon him. The noble-minded Körner—the friend of Schiller—father to the young poet who was so soon to sacrifice his life for his native-land, had heard of his misfortunes. He sought him out, invited him to his house, and welcomed him with almost paternal tenderness. Körner had a ward, a young and lovely girl, and Kleist soon felt the influence of her charms. His affection was returned, and there seemed every probability that his suit would have been crowned with success. But here again his hasty temper and headstrong will ruined his prospects. He insisted, as in the case of his former bride—that the

attachment should remain a profound secret.—To this the young lady refused her consent, and her eccentric lover rushing from her presence returned to it no more. In all this the dawn of insanity was plainly evident. Goethe with his usual keen-sightedness had already long since perceived it. <sup>(1)</sup>

Kleist consoled himself for his disappointment by writing his "Käthchen von Heilbronn", one of the most successful, though far from the best of his dramas. "Käthchen" is evidently designed as the personification of what Kleist regarded as womanly perfection, namely, unswerving, unreflecting, unlimited love and devotion; but these attributes are so exaggerated and carried so completely beyond the bounds not only of womanly dignity, but even of virgin modesty as to disgust rather than to charm. It may be said that the poet intends representing his heroine as under the influence of a spell. This, however, is not indicated with sufficient clearness to excuse her jumping out of a window after a man she beholds for the first time, and following him day and night regardless of his insults and menaces. The scene of the "Vehmgericht", or secret tribunal, with which the piece opens, is striking enough; but the whole conduct of "Käthchen" from the moment when she falls on her knees before the Count von Strahl who has been summoned to answer for his conduct in having, as is supposed, carried her off, to that in which she faints at the thought of leaving him, is the very climax of absurdity. The second act, where we are first intro-

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<sup>(1)</sup> Briefe an Schiller.

duced to the Baroness Kunigunde is better managed. The joyful gratitude of the lady when rescued from her ravisher by von Strahl, her dismay on discovering that her unknown deliverer is the very man against whom she is carrying on a vexatious lawsuit for the purpose of recovering certain castles, and against whom she has striven to arm all the suitors devoted to her charms, are graphically portrayed. So is the passion with which her grace and beauty inspire the Count, and the scene in which she destroys the documents proving her claim.

*Countess von Strahl.*

What have you done my dear, rash, noble girl?  
Well since 'tis really done, come, let me kiss you.

*Kunigunde.*

I am resolved that nothing shall repress  
The gratitude which glows within my breast,  
That every barrier at once shall fall  
Which stands 'twixt my deliverer and me; etc.

After this, we are somewhat amazed to discover Kunigunde's apparent loveliness is all fictitious, and that Käthchen, whose tenderness and devotion remain undiminished and involve her in all sorts of perils, is in fact the natural daughter of the emperor, who is informed of the fact by a heavenly messenger sent down expressly for that purpose. The same angel spreads his protecting wings above the maiden when she is about to be crushed beneath the smouldering roof of the burning castle, and has already long since announced to the Count in a dream that Käthchen is his destined bride; a fact, however, which he has

completely forgotten. The latter part of the story is involved in almost inextricable confusion, and we are tempted every moment to inquire why such mysterious and supernatural agency is brought into play to effect so very commonplace a *denouement* as a marriage. The passion of the Germans for everything mystic and transcendental rendered this drama—despite its many and striking defects—a great favourite and it long enjoyed a celebrity almost as widely spread as that of “Don Carlos” or “Egmont.”<sup>(1)</sup>

The “Prince of Homburg” is in all respects far superior to “Käthchen von Heilbronn.” The epoch is during the thirty-years’ war. Frederick William, Elector of Brandenburg, is leading his army against the Swedes and awaits every moment a decisive action. He has given strict orders that no one, on pain of death, shall leave his post or attack the enemy without express command. The Prince of Homburg seeing the battle going wrong with the Imperialists, forgets his general’s commands, rushes with his cavalry on the advancing foe, drives them back with slaughter, and secures the victory. Forgetting the prohibition, or never dreaming the sentence will be enforced against him to whom the sovereign owes so glorious a triumph, he hastens to lay the captured banners at his feet. Unspeakable is his amazement when the Elector replies by demanding his sword! The third act introduces us to the Prince in his prison and in conversation with his friend Count Hohen-

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(1) Geschichte des deutschen Theaters von Brup.

zollern, who informs him that the council of war has pronounced on him the sentence of death.

Confident in the affection of his cousin convinced that he had signed the decree only as a matter of form and will interfere to save him at the last moment, the prince betrays no alarm; nor is it till the secret consciousness that he may have offended his uncle by affiancing himself without his knowledge or permission to his adopted daughter the Princess Nathalie rushes on his mind, that he begins to share the terror of his friend. On the promise of immediate return he obtains permission to leave his prison for a moment, and hastens to implore the mediation of the Elector's wife. Throwing himself at her feet he beseeches her to save him, and the fear of death overcoming not only his heroism, but even his love, he declares that he renounces all claims to Nathalie's hand, that he will retire to Switzerland and there wear out his life in obscurity, that he will do no matter what, so that he may but live! In this scene we perceive the spirit of exaggeration, the want of harmony and design, which so often ruin Kleist best and finest creations. That even he who has braved death in the battle-field may for an instant recoil before it when it appears in all its ghastly horrors unattended by any of its glorious attributes, is perfectly in accordance with human nature. But that any man, much less a soldier and a hero, should be willing to sacrifice both love and honour, to save his existence, is not only improbable, but, even if true, is so utterly degrading to its object as to render it unfit for scenic representation.

Nathalie, however, flies to implore her uncle's mercy; and the Elector promises to spare the prince if, with his own hand, he will sign the declaration that his sentence is unjust. Not even dreaming that he will refuse a condition so simple, the fond girl hastens with the glad tidings to her beloved. But reflexion has restored the young warrior to calmness and self-possession. He feels that, harsh as is his sentence, it is not in the strict term of the word, unjust. He is conscious that his disobedience, if unpunished, may entail further and more dangerous breaches of discipline. The soldier, the hero revives within his soul. He refuses to sign the paper. Summoned before the Elector he silences his officers who tumultuously demand his release, and declares he is resolved to die.

*Kotwitz.*

Never! my prince —

*Officers to the Elector.*

My Lord! my Sovereign! hear us.

*Prince.*

Silence! it is my firm deliberate will. —  
The sacred laws of war which in the face  
Of all the host I dared to violate  
My voluntary death shall consecrate!  
What can import the idle victory  
This arm perchance might once more win, compared  
With the proud triumph o'er the worst of foes  
Pride and self-will I shall achieve to-morrow.

*Elector.*

My son! my dearest friend! how shall I call thee!

*Kotwitz.*

Oh, God of Heaven! Let me but kiss thy hand.



*Prince to Elector.*

And thou, my prince, whom once I hoped to hail  
 By a still dearer name. — Now lost for me,  
 Thus do I kneel repentant at thy feet.  
 Oh! pardon if in the decisive hour,  
 I served thee with too unreflecting zeal;  
 Death soon will wash me pure from every stain.  
 Grant then this heart, which gladly offers up  
 Its blood to satisfy thy just decree  
 One comfort; tell me that thy breast retains  
 No trace of anger, and as pledge — concede  
 One parting grace —

*Elector.*

Speak, youthful hero, speak!  
 What-e'er it be 'tis granted, ere 'tis ask'd.

*Prince.*

Then do not purchase with thy niece's hand  
 Peace from the Swedish king — hence with the man  
 Who dared propose the barter; hence with him,  
 And let thy cannons give the meet reply.

*Elector.*

Be it as thou wilt — with this embrace, my son,  
 I grant thy last request. Nor do we need  
 This cruel sacrifice wrung from my heart  
 By stern necessity! In every word  
 Thy lips have utter'd, victory shines forth.  
 Yes — he shall learn she is the bride of him  
 Who falls a victim to his country's laws  
 For one rash step — and if he yet would claim her,  
 Why! Let him win her on the battle-field  
 From his brave spirit, which will march before us.

*Prince.*

Ah! now indeed thou givest me new life!  
 May every blessing light upon thy head.

And here the pardon we see is to follow might  
 have been pronounced, and the drama which to

all intents and purposes is ended have been brought to a close. But Kleist's romantic fancy was not content with so matter-of-fact a termination. So there is another scene in the garden, where the prince is led blind-folded believing himself at the place of execution, and while his eyes are unbound the princess places a wreath upon his brow and a chain round his neck, and the curtain drops amid shouts of "Victory! death to the foes of Brandenburg!"

In this drama we perceive a great progress over all Kleist's former works. The plot, though simple, evinces at once greater art and perspicuity, the incidents are mostly probable and well-arranged, and the personages speak and act as men and women would speak and act under similar circumstances. The Elector is skilfully drawn, and if the Prince of Homburg sinks for an instant in our estimation by a degree of cowardice so little in harmony with his general character, his conduct in the latter scenes redeems his momentary weakness.

Although the "Prince of Homburg" attracted considerable admiration, its success was by no means as brilliant as Kleist had fondly anticipated. His friends had led him to hope that it would procure him not only fame but patronage, and proudly as he would once have spurned the thought, his failing health and ruined fortunes had now rendered it acceptable. He had not mental or bodily energy to struggle longer with his destiny, and other circumstances long unknown to the public combined to urge him to the fatal deed which was soon to put an end to his troubled existence.

In 1811 he had become acquainted with a young

and beautiful woman who, amid the richest endowments of mind and person, was, like himself, subject to fits of deep despondency increased by the belief that she was sinking beneath the weight of incurable disease. Despite all appearances to the contrary, we are assured by Kleist's biographers, that the intimacy between him and Henrietta was of the purest nature, and we are disposed to believe it; for the unfortunate young man had never displayed the slightest tendency to licentiousness or dissipation, and happily instances of true and unstained affection between persons of different sexes are not so rare that we should refuse credence in this case. Henrietta, neglected by her husband, sought only consolation in the congenial society of the enthusiastic poet; but the result of such constant intercourse on two minds equally morbid and unhealthy could not but be fatal to both. Kleist was passionately fond of music, and Henrietta had a voice of unusual power and sweetness. One day when she had sung more enchantingly than usual, Kleist exclaimed: "That is beautiful enough to shoot one's self for, *"schön zum Todtschiessen"*. She looked at him earnestly, but made no immediate reply. Some little time afterwards she inquired if he remembered a promise he had made to render her a great service if she desired it? He replied in the affirmative. "Well then", she exclaimed impetuously, "fulfil it now. Kill me; my sufferings render life insupportable. But no! You will not. There are no more men of honour on earth. "You are mistaken", replied Kleist. "I am a man of honour and I will do as I have said."

The idea indeed was not a new one to the unfortunate young man. Often in dark hours of mental suffering had it presented itself to his excited fancy, and now, that he found a spirit as weary of existence as his own, he hailed it, he himself declared, as a sign that "the moment had arrived to take the great final plunge". What lay beyond he did not inquire. We have seen how unsettled were all his religious principles; how often the demon of hypochondria flapped its dark wings over him. His excentricity had disgusted and estranged his family; there was no saving hand to hold him back from the abyss.

Everything was arranged between the unhappy pair with a calmness, a deliberation which would make us doubt the fact of the insanity which darkened the intellects of both, did we not know that madness too has its method. On the morning of the 20<sup>th</sup> of November 1811 they set off together from Berlin, without, it seems, attracting any particular attention, and drove for awhile on the road to Potsdam. They stopped at a little country-inn where they spent the rest of the day and the following morning in apparent cheerfulness. Towards the afternoon they set out on foot for a walk, as they said, and proceeded towards a wood some little distance from the inn. A few hours later a forester heard two shots following each other with strange rapidity. He hastened to the spot whence they came, and found Henrietta lying lifeless beneath an old and blasted tree, her hands clasped on her bosom, while Kleist knelt before her—his head had fallen on his shoulder—he had shot himself through the temple.

Such was the terrible end of this gifted and ill-fated man. The tale needs no comment. It bears its own moral—all words would be superfluous.<sup>(1)</sup>

Passing by Ernest von Houwald, an honest and respectable burgher, who devoted to poetry his leisure hours alone, and whose tragedies, though great favourites in their day, are since forgotten as they deserve to be, we must linger one moment before the "Ahnfrau" or "Ancestress" of Grillparzer, which made almost as great a sensation in Germany as the "Robbers"<sup>(2)</sup>, and has been again performed of late at Vienna with considerable success<sup>(3)</sup>. Anything more extravagant in sentiment and language it is scarcely possible to conceive. The wildest dramas of Müllner or Werner sink into insignificance in comparison. Yet no one can deny that it bears the stamp of genius. The "Ahnfrau" or "Ancestress" has been faithless to her marriage-vow; she has paid the penalty of her guilt with her life, and her spirit is condemned to wander on earth without rest or respite until the very last scion of her race shall be extinct. Of this line, a noble count and his fair daughter alone remain. His son has disappeared in his childhood and has never since been heard of. The maiden, young and guiltless, yields up her heart to a stranger of gallant mien and bearing; but who in fact is no other than the chief of a band of robbers.

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(1) *Leben und Briefe von Heinrich von Kleist*, von Eduard Bülow herausgegeben. 1848.

(2) Die „Ahnfrau“ 1846.

(3) 2te Auflage 1744.

Under the inspiration of a nobler passion, the brigand resolves to leave his base associates and commence a new and better existence. It is too late. The Count, who has long resolved to get rid of the marauders who infest his neighbourhood, avails himself of a stormy and moon-less night to attack them at the head of his soldiers. The robber-chief defends himself with desperate courage, and in the confusion and the darkness stabs the count to the heart. Then comes to light the fearful secret that this chief is no other than the son of the murdered man, and the brother of her who had already promised him her hand. The wretched girl destroys herself, and the involuntary parricide dies raving mad, while the "Ahnfrau" appears once more, not as might be supposed to shed tears of blood over the awful doom her guilt has entailed on her descendants, but to thank God that her troubled spirit will at last find rest, albeit this repose is purchased by the destruction of the last of her line. The language of this strange performance is often mystic and confused; but there are scenes of great dramatic power. "Sappho"<sup>(1)</sup> displays much lyric beauty, though in the attempt to blend the romantic and the classic, the author has not been perfectly successful. Translated into Italian it excited Lord Byron's admiration.

Raupach is one of those, who like Wieland, Kotzebue and others, was praised far above his merits in his own day and has been since depreciated in an almost equally undue degree. That his dramas are too frequently deficient in rapid action, in individuality of

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(1) Sappho 1819. Grillparzer is still living.

character, in harmony of arrangement, must be conceded; but we often find dramatic beauties of no mean order. In the "Hohenstaufen", a series of plays founded on the varied and eventful history of that noble house, Raupach sought to fulfil the exhortation of William Schlegel. Turning from legendary lore and romantic tales, from the adventures of knights and petty princes, he attached himself to the destinies of those who had exercised a real influence on the fate of the nation and thus hoped to produce a national drama. But he did not possess the varied faculties necessary to fulfil so difficult a task. He could not give to his *dramatis personæ* that truth, that reality of colouring without which they are mere poetic abstractions. But if Raupach failed in this, where is the modern German dramatist who has succeeded? In one tragedy at least, Raupach touched the true dramatic chord; in his "Niebelungen Hort". Nothing can exceed the skill with which the materials, scattered in the poem over so immense a period of time <sup>(1)</sup>, are condensed without being crowded, and the characters, while retaining their truth and individuality, are mellowed into harmony and grace. The second part in particular, is in itself a beautiful poem. Few scenes are more touching than that in which Chriemhild, prostrate at her brother's feet, implores him to restore her child. He inquires of what she has to complain.

I scarcely know—my sufferings and my wrongs.  
Have been so many, that as now they rush  
Upon my memory, they half distract me!

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(1) Niebelungen vol. 1st.

Each claims the right of being mentioned first;  
 For each, when separate, appears the greatest.  
 I will not murmur at my Siegfried's death,  
 For thou didst permit, nay more command it.  
 May God forgive thee—thou art still my brother!  
 But never surely could it be thy will  
 To rob my son of his inheritance  
 Won by his gallant father's conquering sword,  
 To tear this child, my last, my only hope,  
 The one bright star that yet remained to shed  
 A ray upon my dark and dreary path—  
 Oh! no—it was not, could not be thy will,  
 To tear this darling from my widowed breast,  
 To rend in twain this sad and breaking heart,  
 And hurry me in anguish to the grave.

How strikingly poetic is the reply of the hapless queen to her waiting-woman when she inquires "what mightier friend she has chosen?"

Thou canst not see her form—by day, she wears,  
 The garb of day—by night, the robe of night,  
 Her step is noiseless as the cloud's swift course;  
 Still as the gathering storm she bends the bow,  
 And her sharp arrows never miss their aim<sup>(1)</sup>

A more modern poet has lately produced a drama on the same subject<sup>(1)</sup>. To examine this does not enter into the scope of our work; but we venture to think that in power, passion and poetic beauty, it is not superior to that of Raupach.

A great portion of Raupach's life was spent far from his native land. Deprived of his father by

(1) "Brunhilde", von Geibel.

(2) *Nibelungen* Fort. *Nibelungen Treasure*. Williams and Norgate 1847.



death while yet a child, one of a numerous family depending for support on a widowed mother, he early accepted a proposal to try his fortune in Russia. Here he entered the family of a Boyard as tutor to his son. He little knew what was in store. The Russian was rude and illiterate as the serfs over whom he ruled. The greater part of the year was passed on the family estate two thousand and fifty versts from Moscow, in the midst of a wild and desolate plain. "I am sorry to tell you", he writes, "that I have fallen into bad hands. When I arrived here I found my chamber in the greatest disorder, the windows broken, a door without a lock. What a father and what a son! there is a younger boy six years old who takes lessons in Russian from a serf, and by his master's express commands at the same time and in the same apartment as ourselves. How is it possible to give instruction under such circumstances? I told the father so; but his reply was that we had only each to do our duty and then we should not interrupt each other. Yesterday he entered while I was giving my geographical lesson. I was just explaining the changes of the seasons. He listened for a while with calmness; but I really thought he would lose his senses on learning that the earth moves round the sun. He insisted on my proving it, and when I replied that this assertion coincided with all astronomical observations, he answered "what did he care for the astronomers."

Raupach did not long remain with this extraordinary family. He entered one more civilised, where he was treated with every distinction and

kindness. Still he never ceased to yearn for his native-land, and was induced to remain in exile, as he called it, only by the generous desire to assist his family. "All I have is yours", he wrote to his brother, "and so long as I remain here I can aid you". He returned to Germany only in 1816 and spent many years at Berlin where he was appointed tutor to the Prince of Prussia who always regarded him with esteem and affection. He died in 1849. On the whole, it may be said that Raupach's fame would have come down brighter to posterity, had his works been confined to the "Niebelungen" and to one or two of his comedies. He wrote too rapidly, expended too little care on his productions, and too often mistook facility for inspiration and exaggeration for sublimity.

In this, however, he is not singular. Sadly indeed has the drama fallen since the bright days of Schiller and Goethe. Where can we discover the calm and classic beauty of the "Iphigenia," the lofty and ennobling inspiration of "Don Carlos" and "Wallenstein"? In Müllner, Werner and Kleist we mark splendid gleams of genius bright and fitful as summer lightning; but never does the divine spark kindle into a clear or steady flame. Nor were the subjects they selected calculated to lend vigour and nationality to the theatre. Schlegel had called on his countrymen to "follow Shakespeare's glorious example, to seize on and discern the poetical aspect of the great events of the age". For the Romantic School, history was too dull, too prosaic. With the exception of Raupach who failed in the task, they

preferred wandering in the domains of the ideal in a sort of perpetual twilight, shunning the cheerful beams of the sun lest they should fright away their poetic dreams, or lest perhaps, by piercing the haze that obscures them, they should discover their imperfections.

Since that period numerous dramatic authors, Grabbe, Hebbel, Mosen &c. have arisen, each with a system of his own, not always of the most intelligible nature. One seeks to attract attention by extraordinary situations, exaggerated sentiments, or physiological curiosities, while another, disdaining altogether probability or nature, transports upon the stage a whole array of myths and symbols, and trusts to the well-known love of his countrymen for every thing vague and sublimated, to justify or excuse him. All these wild theories and essays have thrown the German drama into a pitiable state of confusion. Never did public taste more imperiously demand a wise and resolute guide than at the present moment. Could Lessing rise from the grave, how shocked would he be to discover that, once more as in his own time, his countrymen "had rushed to the very brink of the abyss; that people begin to declare it pedantry and insolence to prescribe to genius what it ought or ought not to do" that all the rules of art are scorned or disregarded, that the same applause which greets the "Griseldis" and the "Gladiator of Ravenna", two productions remarkable, the one for its sweet and simple pathos, the other for beauties of a loftier order, is bestowed a few days afterwards on pieces in which historical truth, good sense, good feeling and mora-

lity are all systematically violated. At moments, we are really tempted to believe that the genius of the German nation, so rich in lyric beauty, so eminently fitted for speculations in the world of abstractions, is, with one or two bright exceptions, utterly incapable of dramatic excellence. But we will not listen to so discouraging a suggestion. Better days will yet dawn. Her poets will discover that it is not by seeking mysterious and arduous paths, by plunging headlong into the very depths of metaphysical subtilities, but by moving the heart and elevating the soul, by reproducing the eternal affections, the noble aspirations, the glorious struggles of humanity in the cause of justice and virtue, that they will achieve the triumphs of which they now only dream, and render the theatre what the great and good Schiller declared it ought to become, a powerful means of instructing and elevating mankind.

If we have lingered somewhat longer on the Romantic School than its intrinsic merits seem to deserve, it is on account of the influence it has exercised and still exercises on the literature not only of Germany, but of Europe at large. On the whole we cannot but think that this influence has been unfavourable. Transcendentalism, symbol and mysticism, often so vaguely, so imperfectly expressed as to resemble nothing so much as the dim outline of those gigantic forms our fancy conjures up in the clouds or in the dying embers of a winter's fire, seem gradually superseding those qualities once deemed essential to true poetic excellence. In the frantic search for originality,—"*il nous faut du nouveau, n'en fut-il*

*plus au monde*", all true sublimity, all simple pathos, all symmetry of design, all artistic skill are not unfrequently remorselessly sacrificed. Yet originality, like genius, must be the spontaneous gift of heaven, and the effort to attain it at any price too often, as we see in the dramatists of Germany, results only in lamentable affectation and hopeless obscurity, which the boldest, the richest imagination cannot redeem. "The poet", it has been finely and truly said, "must reveal the unseen things the common eye cannot see, the melodies the common ear cannot hear. He must interpret the muse's symbols".<sup>(1)</sup> True; but to reveal, he must render himself accessible to the minds to whom the revelation is to be made; to interpret, he must speak the language of those to whom he is to become interpreter. What avails it to address them in an unknown tongue? We have surely sufficient examples in the great masters of all ages and all languages that the spiritual need not be incomprehensible; that we can enter into all the deepest mysteries of thought, without losing ourselves in their mazes.

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(1) West. Review. October 1857.

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## CONCLUSION.

We must now, for the present at least, bid adieu to the poets of Germany. Not that we have by any means exhausted their number. Many yet remain whose strains still delight their native-land.<sup>(1)</sup> Uhland, Freiligrath, Lenau, Platen, Rückert, Kerner, Geibel, Anastasius Grün (Count Auersberg), Achim Arnim, Clemens Brentano, Redwitz &c. &c. But of these the greater part are still living, and neither the scope nor the limits of these volumes will allow any notice of contemporary writers.

We may be asked how is it that in the land of Hroswitha<sup>(2)</sup> no woman's name, save her's, is found amid all those authors we have enumerated? The literary annals of Germany present, indeed, but few examples of high poetical female endowments. Anna Maria Karsch<sup>(3)</sup>, Louisa Brachmann<sup>(4)</sup>, both remembered rather by their melancholy fate than by their verses, Sophie Tieck, sister to the well-known poet, are almost all we can discover, from the early period at which our researches have commenced down to the present day, and their productions are of little

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(1) One or two of the less modern we have likewise omitted as offering little interest, Tiedge, Klinger, etc.

(2) Hroswitha. Vol. 1st. p. 160.

(3) Born 1772, died 1791.

(4) Born 1776, died 1822. She destroyed herself in consequence of an unrequited passion.

merit. That brilliant constellation of female genius which shines upon our own land has not yet risen on the German horizon. Latterly, indeed, many of the gentler sex have achieved considerable success in the domain of Prose-romance, and the names of Caroline Pichler, L. Mühlbach (*Mad<sup>me</sup> Mundt*), Johanna Schopenhauer, Caroline Baroness de la Motte Fouqué, Ida Countess of Hahn-Hahn &c., may be cited with just pride by their country. But with these we have nothing to do. <sup>(1)</sup>

Another fact is not unworthy of notice. Most of the poets whose biographies we have recorded, spring indeed from the lower or middling classes of society, and had to struggle, during a considerable portion of their lives with the disadvantages of a narrow income or even with grinding poverty. But, owing to the facilities afforded to mental training in Germany, all, with scarcely a single exception, enjoyed the advantages of a classical or even of an university education. Hans Sachs himself the honest shoemaker of the sixteenth century, was a good Greek and Latin scholar. We find none "born in the huts where poor men lie" bred among the humble, the un-lettered, the un-refined, with no instruction save that afforded by a village schoolmaster, with no companions save boors and peasants as ignorant as themselves, who by the innate force of their genius have, like our own Burns, soared to some of the highest regions of poetry or like Hogg, Cunningham, Clare and Bloomfield found their way to the hearts of a whole nation. This fact

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<sup>(1)</sup> In like manner we have omitted all mention of Jean Paul Richter etc.

is not without interest as proving how small is the influence of mere scholastic knowledge in developing poetic powers.

On the whole, despite our sincere admiration for the Teutonic genius, we must confess that it seems to us somewhat enervated, by perpetual wanderings in the shadowy realms of mystic speculation. Like Orpheus in the abode of the dead, it too often evokes shadows, beautiful, indeed, to the view, but which instead of transforming themselves into real living beings, vanish into empty air, leaving nought behind them save a vague remembrance. In all ages the Germans, have loved to represent reality under the veil of symbol, as is sufficiently indicated by the vast popularity of Sebastian Brandt's "Narrenschiff" <sup>(1)</sup> and the deep hold the legend of Faust <sup>(2)</sup> took on the public mind. The tone of their earlier poems, nevertheless, is essentially realist. There is nothing either vague or unsubstantial in the "Gudrune" or in the "Nibelungen." But gradually the love of myth and emblem conducted them to that haziness, that transcendentalism, which have, more or less, invaded every branch of their literature, poetry, drama, philosophy, nay history itself. Amid all the storms and convulsions of modern times, this dreamy tendency still, in the main, keeps the upper-hand. It pervades the compositions of Uhland, of Rückert, of Freiligrath, of Kerner,—exquisite as many of them are,—no less than those of Tieck or Novalis. But new and mighty influences are at work, which can scarcely

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<sup>(1)</sup> Vol. 1st, p. 305.

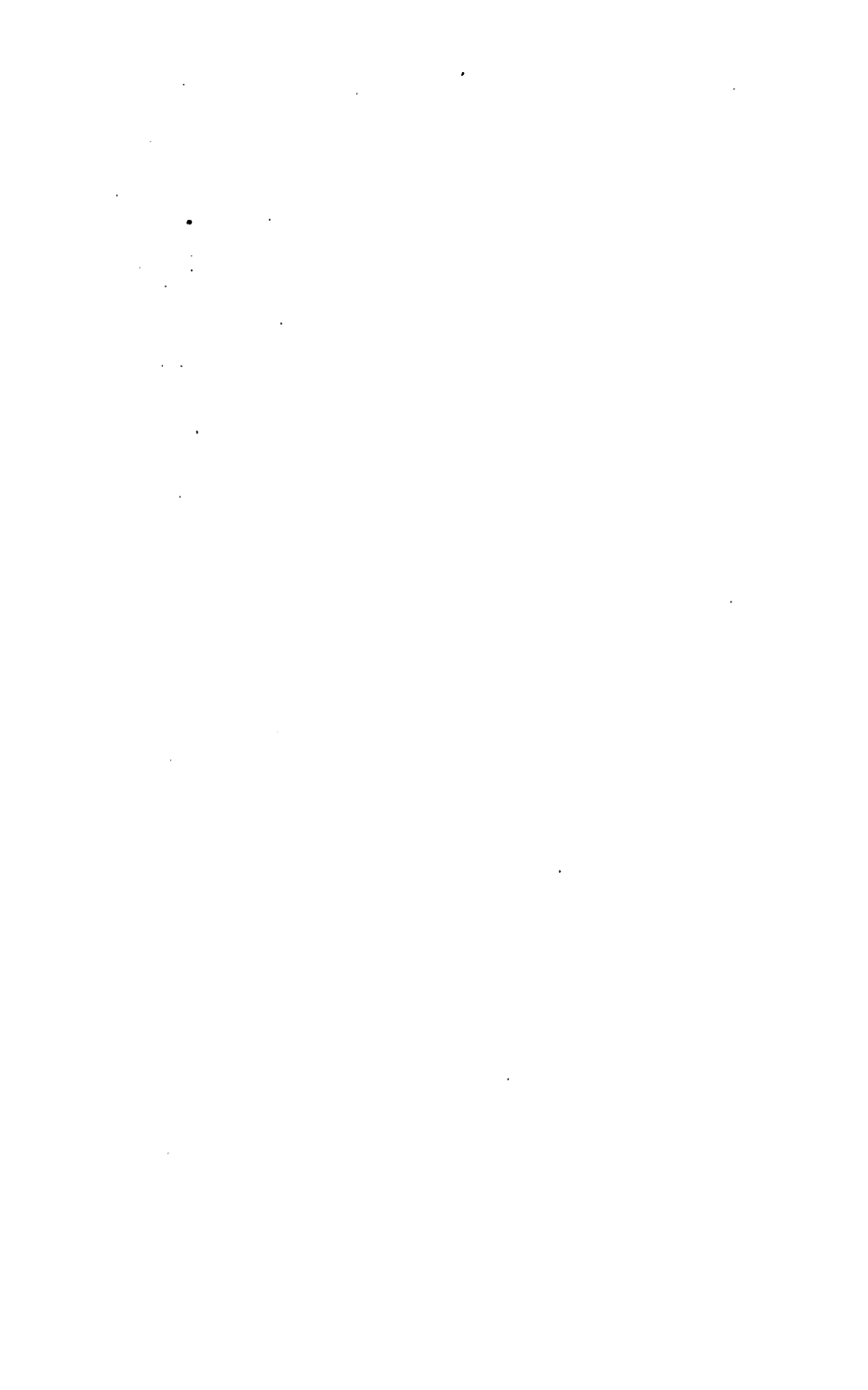
<sup>(2)</sup> Vol. 1st, p. 393.



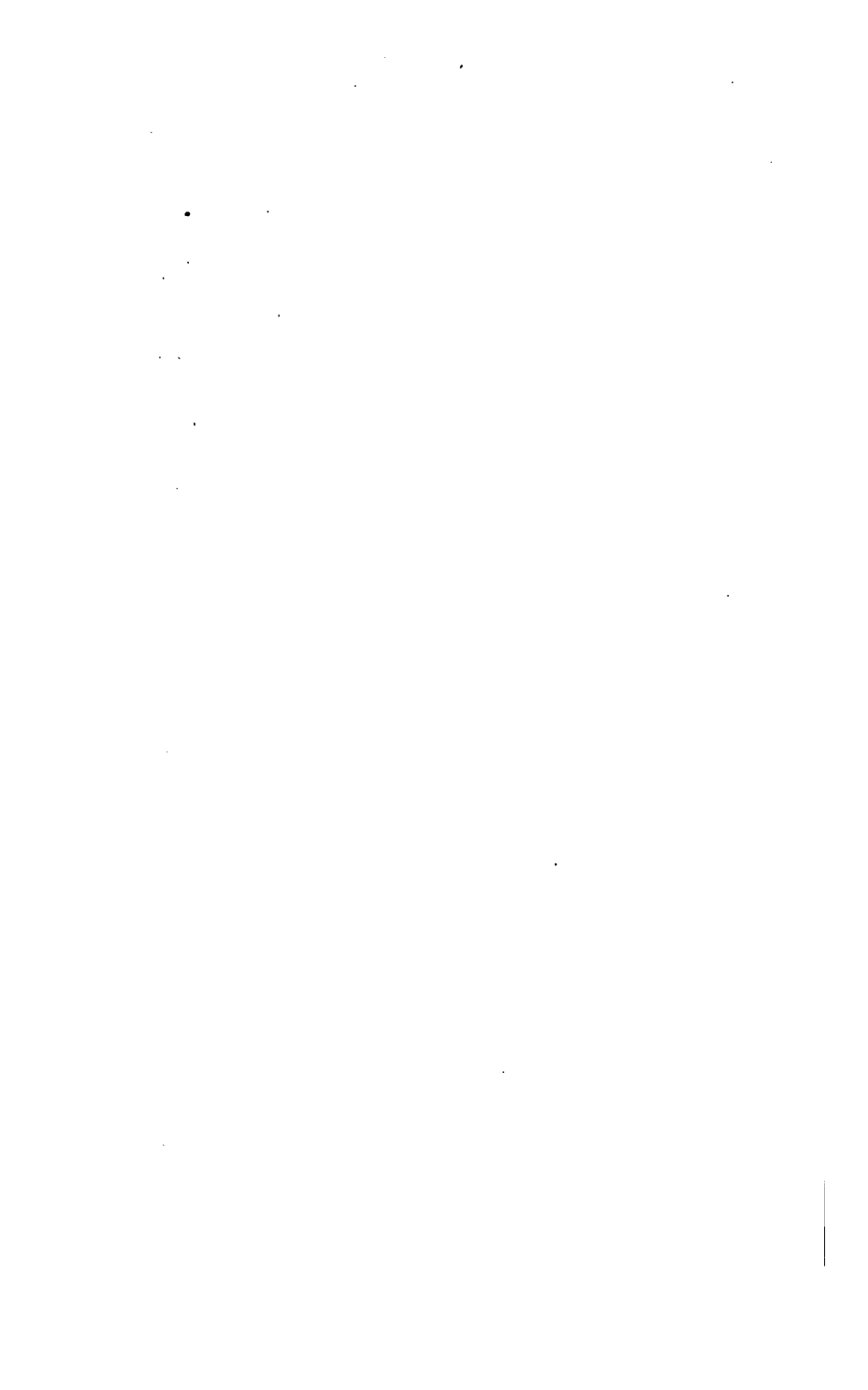
fail to effect a change. Already does the school "of young Germany" seek to place the real on the pedestal hitherto occupied by the ideal alone. Let us hope that this re-action, so salutary in itself, may not be carried too far, that it may not result in the fatal utilitarianism which would fain limit our horizon to the narrow span bounding our immediate view, and confining the destiny of man to mere material enjoyment would banish all that is noble and elevated in our nature.

Perhaps it is reserved for our Teutonic brethren, to solve one of the most difficult of problems, to succeed in retaining all that is spiritual, lofty, pure, and holy in poetry, while excluding that nebulous mysticism, that bewildering indistinctness, that dim and sleepy atmosphere which now so often disfigure their brightest creations, to become in literature as in life, more practical, more energetic, more vigorous, more lucid without losing any of the lofty and high-soaring aspirations by which they are now distinguished.













the 1990s, the number of people in the UK who are employed in the public sector has increased by 1.5 million, from 2.5 million in 1980 to 4 million in 1995. The public sector has become a major employer in the UK, and its growth has been a major factor in the overall growth of the economy.

The public sector has also become a major provider of social services, and its growth has been a major factor in the overall growth of the economy. The public sector has become a major provider of social services, and its growth has been a major factor in the overall growth of the economy.

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